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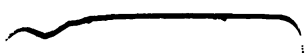

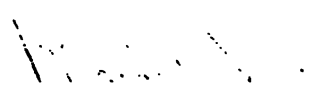

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A SON OF MARS

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Author of

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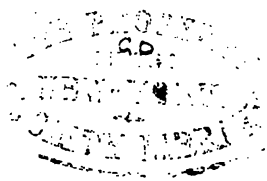

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A SON OF MARS

BOOK ONE

THE BOMBARDMENT OF ZANZIBAR

CHAPTER I

HOW SAID KHALID DEFIED THE BRITISH FLEET

At exactly nine o'clock on the morning of the 27th of August, 1896, the reverberating boom of a heavy gun on board an English man-of-war in the harbor of Zanzibar announces that the threat of Admiral Rawson was no idle boast, but that the bombardment of the sultan's palace and the old custom house has begun.

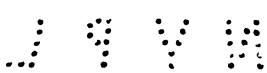
Both of these places have been hastily fortified by the usurper, Said Khalid, who dares defy the protectorate of Great Britain, backed as he is by a force of some twenty-five hundred well disciplined

soldiers, one-third of whom are native Askaris, trained under British officers until almost equal as bold fighters to the famous Goorkhas, the Sikhs and the Pathans or Afghans of India. Besides, these rebels have a number of good field-pieces with which they threaten the five British war vessels in the harbor.

It was in 1873 that Sir Bartle Frere and Sir John Kirk arranged a treaty with the then sultan, Seyijed Burghash, abolishing the slave trade as a legitimate business. In 1890, Great Britain assumed the protectorate of Zanzibar, on condition that she ceded Heligoland to Germany, and raised no objection to France conquering the great island of Madagascar.

The late sultan, Hamed Bin Thwin, who held his position through his friendship for Great Britain, having suddenly given up the ghost in a very suspicious manner, after the usual style of Oriental potentates in general, the bold Pretender had proclaimed himself sovereign, gathered what appeared to be an invincible army around him, and defied the authority of the British.

It is Alexandria over again, on a smaller scale, and what the ponderous war engines of the great battle ships served to Arabi Pasha on the former occasion, the guns of the Raccoon, the Thrush and



the Sparrow, backed by the cruiser Philomen and the flagship St. George, proceed to administer in anything but homeopathic doses to Said Khalid at Zanzibar.

After the boom of that first signal gun, shot and shell are fairly rained upon the devoted fortress where the mutineers have taken up their quarters.

The walls of the palace offer little or no resistance to the metal globes that, propelled with all the force and science known to modern gunnery, crash through stone wall and casement, rip up floors, demolish the pillars surrounding the court, and promise to make a gigantic pepper-box or sieve out of the building where the despotic rulers of East Africa have held sway for a period stretching far back into the dim past.

The scene a little later is one that would delight the eye of a warrior who longed to scent the smoke of battle.

Right gallantly the Askaris and Zanzibaris who man the guns of the usurper stick to their task, and blaze away at the mailed sides of the gunboats without producing the faintest impression, until one by one the field pieces are dismounted or scattered in fragments, while the walls begin to crumble in many pla , being honey-combed by the passage of those

crashing iron spheres fashioned in English foundries.

While this exchange of compliments is in full blast, the armed steamer Glasgow, manned by a band of the insurgents, opens fire upon the British fleet; but a few well aimed shells from the heavy guns of the Raccoon, together with a shot or two from the four-inch growlers of the Sparrow, crash through her, silencing that fire in short order, and ultimately sinking her at her moorings. Seconds merge into minutes, and it is almost half an hour since the opening of this marine duel. No damage has been done to the ironclads, but the effect of their practice is woefully plain, illustrating the awful results of modern gunnery.

The palace is already a ruin, and flames can be seen in several quarters, whether the result of bursting shells or malicious deviltry on the part of the discomfitted foe no one might declare.

Still the dreadful cannonade goes on, the crashing reports following each other with the regularity of a ponderous trip-hammer's descent; and through the curling billows of smoke eager eyes watch to see the result, which, being discerned in the upheaval of stones or the flying splinters of wood, is greeted with hearty cheers from the throats of bronzed sea-dogs who man the guns.

By degrees the answering fire has slackened growing more and more feeble as gun after gun is overturned, until at length, as the hour of ten arrives, the order for which the marines and bluejackets have been so impatiently waiting is given.

From behind each sheltering ironclad heavily laden boats shoot out, and the race for the shore has begun.

An occasional growl beyond the landing proclaims that the followers of the usurper still hold forth in scattered sections, and once a cannon ball, ricochetting along the water, comes within an ace of cutting the leading boat in half.

Brawny arms tug at the oars, and eager eyes scan the shore in search of armed foes, for the marines are like hounds long held in the leash, such has been the nervous tension of the last hour, with the music of great guns beating a diapason of war that arouses fierce memories of other days, when England's martial sons have won glory at the cannon's mouth.

Seated alongside an officer in the sternsheets of the leading boat may be seen a tall figure that is bound to attract more than passing notice.

This party is garbed in what might be termed a semi-military suit which would naturally indicate that while once a soldier he is no longer upon the

active army roll. His form, somewhat gaunt, is the seat of tremendous muscular activity. despite the fact that this hero of wars long past must be on the shady side of sixty.

A ruddy face, marked with clear, humorous, gray eyes, and a fierce, military white moustache, stamps his character as a fighting man, though his presence in the first boat to near the Zanzibar shore should be sufficient evidence in that line.

The landing of the blue-jackets is not to be entirely without argument on the other side. Here and there a gun cracks, and while most of the leaden pellets splash harmlessly in the blue water of the harbor, a few find lodgment among the occupants of the boats.

Faster still the oars splash in the sunlight, and eager men crouch there ready to leap upon the shore, anxious to pit their valor against that of the dusky Arabs and Zanzibaris who have rallied to the support of the self-made sultan, as though scenting new danger to their infamous slave trade in the continuation of Great Britain's protectorate over the country that stretches down almost to the sandy region of the mystic Zambesi.

The shore is close at hand when the leading boat grounds in shallow water.

Instantly the man with the white moustache is overboard, uttering a roar of delight that serves as a signal to the rest; and up to their knees in water they splash to the shore, running, jumping and shouting like a pack of schoolboys out for a lark.

One, two men fall under the shots that greet them at short range, but already the most agile have gained a footing, and woe to the dusky Askaris found with smoking weapons in their hands.

Thus marines and blue-jackets from the fleet swarm ashore at Zanzibar, and proceed to occupy the town.

The bombardment has, naturally enough, created a panic among the inhabitants, even though the iron hail has been directed almost wholly against the two fortified places, which are now crumbling ruins and on fire.

Scenes of tremendous excitement are being enacted in every street. Terrified blacks lie upon the ground in abject fear. Arabs hide in their houses, or if upon the street make a great display of sympathy for the sturdy marines who resistlessly sweep up and down, ready to burst into any building from the interior of which a single shot proceeds.

"To the palace!" is the cry of the veteran, as with a squad of valiant tars at his heels he tramples over

all impediments which incumber the narrow streets.

That dreadful, pulsating anvil chorus, indicating the regular discharge of gun after gun, has about ceased, since the work laid out for the fleet has been accomplished.

A confusion of sounds arises, the shouts of terror-stricken men and women upon whom this bombardment has come with all the horrors of a judgment day.

With admirable forethought the commander has sent boats around the island to prevent the escape of Said Khalid to the mainland by means of a slaver's dhow, should he manage to live through the storm of shot and shell that has descended upon his palace.

There is no need of a guide to show these daring spirits the way to the palace, for the location has been strongly impressed upon their minds of late, and besides, the column of smoke arising serves to direct them, even as the wandering Israelites were led in their desert pilgrimage.

Stampeding one or two little detachments of half-hearted enemies who make feeble attempts to stay their progress, they presently dash into the square before the palace.

This building, while never a thing of beauty such as a Sultan of Turkey or Morocco might occupy,

has nevertheless been reckoned far superior to any other edifice on the islands of Zanzibar or Pemba. It is now a wreck—British shot and shell have dislocated its sturdy walls, while smoke in various portions of the ruins tells that fire is completing the destruction of what the bombardment spared.

Here and there silent forms lie outstretched on the ground, showing that the followers of the pretender stood to their guns with a loyalty worthy of a better cause.

Not a living thing appears in sight. If the advance upon the palace has been made in the hope of capturing the obstinate Said Khalid they arrive too late, since that worthy—who has possibly made secret arrangements, before braving the wrath of the British, with those whom he knows to be his friends—has already retired to the German consulate, where he will be safe from seizure.

The veteran, upon reaching the palace, appears to be laboring under some excitement other than the natural result of his surroundings.

He turns an anxious eye upon the mass of wreckage, and shakes his head in a dubious manner while muttering:

"This is beastly luck—ten to one we have arrived too late!"

A moving figure catches his eye—it is that of a Zanzibaris, wounded in the wreck of the palace, who, while pinned down by a fallen beam, endeavors to escape the fate that threatens from the advancing fire.

Into the ruins plunges the Briton, straight to where the poor devil struggles—one exertion of his mighty arms and the timber is tossed aside.

The dark soldier turns to pour out a flood of thanks, when he is interrupted by the other, who seems to fire questions at him like hot shot.

No matter what the answers are, they seem to arouse the tall Briton—he appeals to the man whose life he has saved, and such is the force of his logic that the black becomes insensible to danger for the time being—turning in his tracks he plunges into the midst of the wrecked palace, with the veteran swinging along close at his heels.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN WHO OCCUPIED THE SULTAN'S DUNGEON

All around them lie splinters of wood, masses of shattered stone, dismounted guns, and dead Arabs, while the air is so thick with the smoke that comes from the burning timbers that they are at times even compelled to grope their way along.

The man of Zanzibar evidently knows every foot of ground. It is well, since a mistake might be fatal to them now.

Dodging a falling timber here, crawling under a wreck further on, they speedily reach what appears to be a yawning cavity. Stone stairs may be faintly discovered, although half concealed under the foreign material deposited upon them by the bursting bombs so neatly dropped into the palace by those genii of the modern fleet, who handle the great guns.

The Zanzibar soldier has already snatched up a billet of wood, one end of which is sulkily smouldering.

This he whips around his head in great fantastic circles, and the rush of air fans the red embers into a fierce flame, when, behold, a most excellent torch is at their service.

Having thus secured the light necessary to an exploration of the underground region beneath the palace, the black guide drops down the incumbered steps, with that tall, resolute figure serving as his shadow.

They strike a passage and come upon the body of a wretched gunner who has crept into this crypt to die.

At any moment they may be met by the roar of guns belonging to fugitives who have possibly sought refuge in these vaults under the palace. Little he cares, this tall man with the fearless mien and the eye of an eagle, he has supped with danger all his life and would die of *ennui* if unable to occasionally indulge in the excitement of active warfare. The crash of arms, the wild cries of combatants and the awful clamor of battle, so demoralizing to many a heart, is meat and drink to him.

As they push on the Englishman has picked up some object which in spite of its weight he carries lightly in one hand. It is a huge sledge hammer, used for some purpose in manipulating the guns of

the palace and carried into the underground passage by a fugitive in full flight.

The man of Zanzibar has ceased to advance. He stands there pointing his flaming torch at the wall, where a small but stout door appears.

Already has he endeavored to open this, but it resists every attempt. Then is made manifest the wisdom and forethought of the veteran. That heavy hammer swings through space and sounds the knell of the staunch door. Once, twice it comes against the planks, already the splinters fly and a third stroke completes the business, for with a crash the wrecked fabric gives way.

Snatching the torch from the black hand of his guide, the Briton pushes through the opening his quick work has fashioned. At the same time his cheery voice bawls out:

"Jack Gordon, ahoy! A rescue!"

From some corner of the damp dungeon comes bounding a figure that utters hoarse cries of ecstatic delight, that seizes upon the tall veteran and actually hugs him as one might an angel.

"I had given up all hope when I heard the roar of battle, and knew from the sounds the Arabs were getting licked, for I was sure they'd think to murder me before skipping. Tell me, how has it gone?" he

asks eagerly, after the manner of a man whose heart has been anxious for participation in the fray.

"Bah! there was little fight in the dogs—we rattled their forts about their ears, and now own the town. Your note was brought on board just before daylight by a nigger who swam out to the ship."

"Fortune was kind and I am free. It's hard to believe it, when death has seemed so near." The man called Jack Gordon steps back to look at his rescuer. As he does so, both of them seem to be affected by a mutual surprise. "Surely we have met before, sir," declares the late prisoner of Said Khalid.

"I am sure of it. Let me see, you are the chap we picked up adrift in mid ocean last spring when I was with Captain Reynolds on the good steamer Albatross," declares the soldier, eyeing the other in puzzled surprise.

"What you say is true. Twice you have helped to save my life. Surely there is a fate in that. I was down with fever until they landed me in Hong Kong; but, sir, I did not neglect to learn to whom I was indebted for such exceeding kindness. You are Sir Roderic Cavendish, the soldier of fortune, whose sword has never rusted in its scabbard since the days of the Crimea. I am proud to know you, proud to

owe my life to you. As a man of few words you must take the rest for granted."

The veteran readily accepts his hand in a hearty squeeze. No matter if his whole life has been filled with wild adventure and incident, no matter if he carries the scars of twenty battles on his person, his heart is just as big and warm as they make them.

"Ah! yes, I had just come from Cape Town. You know we got into a tremendous mess down there under Jameson. Yes, I was in that raid under another name, and to tell you the truth it was the hottest piece of business I've known for years. Those old Boers know how to use their guns to some good purpose. With three others I managed to escape the general round-up, and left the country lest they might want to interview me. The great luck that takes me to all places where old Mars shows his grisly front caused me to drift to Zanzibar. I've been at it forty-five years now, my boy, and have determined to die in the harness. But it is deuced strange we should meet again under such remarkable conditions, dy'e know?"

"I take it as a good omen, Sir Roderic. But since you have done so much for me already, it emboldens me to ask a further favor. Take me out of this

wretched place—I have good reasons for wishing my liberty in this Arab town to-day."

"It's none of my business, Gordon, why you want to get out of here; but if an old war dog of my calibre can be of any further assistance, call on me without hesitation. When a man has followed heroic Raglan at the storming of Alma he is ready for any adventure under heaven; providing, of course, that it is not too intimately connected with the angelic sex—" with an inquiring look at the other, as though a sudden suspicion has arisen.

"Still," says Gordon, quickly, "although you may be a woman-hater you will not refuse to back me up in saving the life of a fellow country-woman—at least an European."

"I am at your elbow—count on me to the death. But do you mean to say such a person has been kept a prisoner under our guns?"

"The British consul does not know half the strange things that of late have taken place in this town, nor does he possibly suspect who has given Said Khalid the necessary backing to throw such defiance in the admiral's face. But every second is precious. As we go I can tell you how I came here, the prisoner of an Arab prince, and doomed to death. Let us make a start toward saving Hildegarde."

"So that is her name. I have heard you speak it before, young man," as he leads the way over the shattered door to the narrow and crooked corridor along which they must proceed to reach daylight.

The Zanzibaris has vanished, evidently believing he has already squared his score with the veteran for saving his life and desirous of escaping upon some dhow that will carry fugitives of the battle to the mainland where the whole of Africa is before them.

"When did I mention the name of Hildegarde before?" questions Gordon, as he keeps along at the other's side, content to go wherever Sir Roderic leads.

"In your delirium on board the steamer, after we picked you up adrift on the China sea. I knew there were petticoats connected with your adventure as is usually the case. Wine and women bring pretty much all the woe there is in this world, though I'm not saying they don't bring some of the blessings, too. I've had my experience, Jack Gordon," with something of bitterness in his voice.

"At any rate, you're right in one thing, sir, it was on account of Hildegarde I was sent adrift. I promise you the story at any time you please. What's that?" as a tremendous shudder seems to convulse the very earth around them.

"Only some magazine about the old palace kick-

ing up a little rumpus," declares the soldier, calmly; "and as we're not hurt we have no cause for complaint. If this torch holds out we can reach the steps and come on the palace square, where we'll find blue-jackets at work."

The explosion has shattered the walls and in their fall they crush through into the passage, so that presently it is necessary to clamber over all manner of obstacles; but Gordon, although lacking the toughened frame of the man who has made war his hobby for nearly half a century, keeps at his side, being urged on by an impulse that in the history of the world has caused men to dare and accomplish all things—the love of a woman.

CHAPTER III

COMRADES

So, in due course of time these two who have been thrown together under such remarkable conditions, bursting through the maze of twisted timbers and piled up debris, make a run for it amid the suffocating smoke, and, thanks to Sir Roderic's sagacity in choosing the right route, stagger from the ruins of the sultan's palace.

Hearty English cheers greet their appearance. Blue-jackets are to be seen, working like beavers to prevent the fire from spreading to adjoining buildings, lest the whole wretched town go up in a vast burst of flame. They labor just as assiduously to save as they did erstwhile to destroy when helping to send that rain of metal upon the devoted stronghold of the caliph.

As soon as they pump a little fresh oxygen into their lungs, the two men feel quite refreshed, and are ready to engage in further work

Gordon, as seen in the daylight, appears to be quite a likely looking young chap, although no man may look his best after being immured in an Arab dungeon. At any rate the gray orbs of the man of war kindle as he reads the quiet determination written upon the countenance of the other, as though he has surely recognized a daring spirit after his own heart.

"Are you with me, Sir Roderic?" Jack asks.

"I have promised to see you through, since fate drifted your note for help into my hands. Arm yourself—there are plenty of guns lying around loose, and the poor devils will never need them again."

Gordon jumps at the chance. Somehow the very fact of being possessed of weapons gives one an additional sense of security, and this is especially the case after having escaped from durance vile.

Wresting a decent looking repeating rifle of German manufacture from the stiffened fingers of an Arab who is minus the upper portion of his cranium, owing to his getting the worst of it in an argument with one of the Philomen's shells, Gordon only looks to see that the magazine has several cartridges within.

Then he starts down through the lower end of the

palace square with the eagerness of a man who knows where he is going, and is anxious to cover ground.

Gentle, white-winged peace has by no means as yet descended upon wretched Zanzibar. While some of the men from the fleet battle with the hungry flames, others engage with squads of the enemy wherever they may be found. At such a time as this the worst elements invariably rise to the surface, and amid the confusion, as during the Reign of Terror in Paris, every rogue is on the alert to take advantage of the opportunity, thinking how he may feather his nest.

Here and there a few defiant rebels have entrenched themselves in a house, from the flat roof of which they open fire upon the advancing marines; but the Englishmen are equal to the emergency, and bursting open the door of the building they press their way to the roof, while others seek house-tops adjoining, from whence a shower of bullets must compel an evacuation or immediate surrender. Perhaps some of these blue-jackets were also at Alexandria, and have not forgotten the tactics put in force to control the hostile mob of Egyptians after the bombardment of that Nile metropolis.

Hundreds of negro slaves can be seen, who have

profited by the tumult to gather in droves, and attempt pillage. This is the worst peril to be feared, since two-thirds the population of Zanzibar consists of negroes, most of them slaves, held in by ten thousand Arab masters. Ignorant, and wild with excitement, these blacks constitute a dangerous element, since they may fire the town; and more than one slave has already been shot down with a blazing torch in his hand.

Jack Gordon runs like a hound upon a hot scent—runs with the grim determination of a man who knows his rendezvous, and is dead set about getting there.

This is a point decidedly in his favor, at least in the observant eyes of the fire-eater who races at his side; and surely one who has observed man under all manner of conditions should make a fair judge, though he fancies not the fact of its being a woman whose smiles and frowns seem to rule the life of the young adventurer.

Nor do they reach their destination without some rough-and-tumble experience

Gordon will remember what he saw to his dying day. Several battle-crazed Arabs, discovering a pair of lonely Britons isolated from their blue-jacket companions, come prancing forth from the re-

cesses where they have been lying in wait for such a "snap," and proceed to overwhelm the wanderers in the shortest possible space of time.

Gordon finds time to drop one with a bullet from his German-made repeater, and then, as usual, the blessed thing goes back on him, the mechanism becoming clogged, so that he can only make use of his gun as a means of parrying the fierce assault of several dusky slave-drivers, who endeavor to disembowel him with yataghan, kriss and Hindoo "kukri."

In thirty seconds the scene has changed as completely as though touched by the magic wand of a sorcerer—those Arabs who continue to remain on the spot are beyond the point of doing evil—three others gallop down the street at a pace that would put a professional sprinter to the blush, and dropping a miscellaneous assortment of weapons and garments as they run, in the hope of accelerating their pace, while the terrible English man of war follows a fourth mahogany rascal, whose keen-edged kriss has tasted of his blood, into a native house and up to the roof, where he corners him, gives him a show for his money—and leaves him there.

So that scrape is over, and but little damage done on their side.

Gordon has smashed the treacherous German gun against a wall, and prefers to decorate his person with some of the heterogeneous weapons discarded by the Arabs who fled in such disorder when they saw the hero of the Crimea settle down to business.

The coast being clear, they make a new start.

Sir Roderic has been touched once or twice, but scoffs at such trivial wounds, which he compares to needle thrusts. When a man has gone through such varied scenes as have fallen to the lot of this war-horse during four decades, familiarity is pretty apt to breed a species of contempt for anything short of a disabling or mortal wound.

They see other hostiles, but it would seem as though some magical influence in the air has given full warning of their fighting abilities, since these worthies display the utmost alarm at sight of them and seek to secure their safety by a precipitate flight.

As they continue to advance, the veteran keeps an eye upon his companion.

He has long ere now made up his mind that Gordon could not have been a prisoner in the sultan's palace any length of time, since he does not show signs of weakness.

His curiosity is of course aroused, and he specu-

lates as to the peculiar drift of affairs that would bring this young chap, whom he had helped to rescue upon the Chinese sea, to far away Zanzibar, and all on account of a woman whose name is Hildegarde.

That name has played the deuce with Sir Roderic's past—it has been buried for many years, and yet the very mention of it seems to roll away the scroll of time and awaken scenes that have long slumbered.

He even chides himself for allowing such memories to awaken from their long sleep, and mentally calls himself an old fool because he experiences strong curiosity to look upon Jack's divinity, whose name chances to be the same as that member of the gentler sex who played skittles with his soldier heart in the long ago.

Ah! Jack Gordon no longer advances on the run—his rapid pace degenerates into a walk, and finally even this ceases.

They have not left the town, but passed to a portion remote from the spot where the tragic scenes of the palace have occurred.

Native houses are on every side, and not a few persons may be seen upon the crooked, narrow street, though the majority seem to be negroes in a panic.

With a scent of burnt powder in the air, and many

sounds indicative of warfare still reaching the ears, the picture is one never to be forgotten by these people of the east coast, who never before heard the awful roar of great guns, nor saw the tremendous desolation wrought by a bursting shell.

Gordon only looks once around him, as if to make sure he is right.

Then he turns to a building that appears to be of more pretentious dimensions than its neighbors.

In vain he shakes the door—it is held fast by a chain within. What would he not give for a minute's possession of the friendly sledge with which Sir Roderic battered in the door of his prison?

The soldier even hurls his powerful frame forward but fails to more than shake the barrier that blocks all progress.

His quick eye searches for some tool with which he may serve his end, but the quest is in vain, since the roadway appears to be a dusty thoroughfare, quite destitute of loose stones, large or small.

This man, however, is so accustomed to throttling difficulties that no sooner does one chance fail him than he is on the line of another.

With him there are more ways of accomplishing a thing than enter into the philosophy of most men.

He steps back and surveys the Zanzibar dwelling

with a critical eye; nor does his gaze rest upon it alone.

There are others.

Thus the man of campaigns discovers just where he can outwit the legacy of the barred door, and by a flank movement gain entrance.

"This way, Gordon—boarders ahoy!" is the cheery shout he raises, as he makes a bee-line for the doorway of the dun-colored building to the left.

Already has he discovered that in this case the barrier is a frail one, racked with the infirmities of age.

When this human hurricane smashes up against the door, it goes all to pieces, very like those seen upon the stage, and which have been cleverly arranged to show the battering-ram propensities of the hero.

Sir Roderic keeps right on, knowing Jack is following at his heels—Jack who can congratulate himself on the kind fortune that has enlisted such a fighting machine in his favor.

A figure intercepts the advance of the bold intruder—the figure of a gigantic black, no doubt a slave faithful to the interests of his master, who would do them mischief with a keen scimetar which he whirls about his head like a master at arms.

Sir Roderic accepts the challenges, makes a pass or two with his own blade, and the curved weapon of the black is sent hissing into a corner.

Then, instead of running the fellow through as he might have done an Arab under similar conditions, the soldier simply gives him a turn that sends him spinning to one side like a whirling Dervish.

The road is clear.

Another moment and they pass through the central court, take advantage of an open window and gain what appears to be a tropical garden beyond.

Just as the soldier suspected, there is a wall separating them from the adjoining enclosure.

As his quick eye ranges along it, he discovers a small tree growing against this wall, which can be made to serve the purpose of a ladder in the hands of those whom long experience has taught the secret of utilizing simple means in order to attain an end.

To see him go up that wall one would believe him a born sailor, a man-ape, anything in fact but a veteran with the frosts of more than sixty winters upon his head.

Jack Gordon, young and athletic of build, besides, eager as a hound upon the trail, to cross the Rubicon of that dividing wall, is put to his best paces in

order to keep in touch with this wonderful man who never seems to grow old or weary of excitement.

Once on the wall they speedily find a means of descent.

Hardly have they gained the ground than through the bushes come a couple of savage dogs such as are seldom seen outside of an Arab town.

These animals, being maddened by the appearance of strangers, are only to be pacified by cold steel, which they immediately receive in liberal doses, Jack finding an opportunity to test some of the various weapons of Arab manufacture picked up on the street of Zanzibar.

A few slashes, one or two yelps, and the deed is done, the canine defenders of the castle being placed *hors de combat.*

Now the two comrades press on to the wall of the silent building which is to be the next object of attack.

CHAPTER IV

OVER LAND OR SEA

This time it is Gordon who discovers a weak point in the defenses, and with the zeal of an eager lover he has torn a shutter from its bronze hinges by the time Sir Roderic, attracted by his shout, rushes to the spot.

The latter seems to know just what to do, and hastens Jack's passage through the narrow slit which serves as an apology for a window in Oriental palace or hovel.

Hardly have Gordon's heels vanished than the fire eater flings himself into the breach, and such is the rapidity of his movement that he does not lose sight of the other, even handicapped as he is by the lack of assistance in crawling through the split in the wall.

Gordon chases from one apartment to another in search of his Hildegarde.

The house appears deserted—he raises his voice

and shouts her name, but though there may be magic in its quickening power, it fails to arouse more than a dismal echo now.

Up and down, into every room, along each passage —to the flat roof, into the court, where a fountain dreamily plays, he chases, but not a living soul appears.

Gordon has experienced a burning disappointment, and he shows it in his manner. To his companion it is all a blank mystery as yet, but he is willing to await the explanation under more favorable auspices.

Perhaps past campaigns have given Sir Roderic higher abilities as a forager—at least he examines nooks and crannies where Jack never thinks of looking.

The result is a discovery.

As he cautiously introduces the point of his trusty blade into a black recess which he does not care to enter, the action is greeted with a bubbling cry of terror, proving that after all the Zanzibar domicile has at least one wretched tenant. And the soldier, thrusting an arm into the crevice in place of his steel, clutches the one who abides there, and drags him out. As he suspected, it is a negro, a diminutive chap, quaking with terror.

Gordon comes running up, attracted by the noise, and immediately falls to work firing questions at the black, but of course as he talks English the poor devil seems only bewildered at his language.

Seeing this, Sir Roderic takes him in hand, having a smattering of the Arabic tongue, spoken for the most part along the coast where these strange people have for centuries stamped their vagabond customs upon the natives, robbing them of both wealth and liberty under the maxim that might makes right.

The little slave's eyes sparkle when he hears what the tall Briton has to say, for the first effort of Sir Roderic is directed towards assuring him of their pacific intentions.

So potent does the charm of the soldier diplomat appear to be that he speedily unlocks the lips of the quaking negro, who ventures to make reply.

Even this does not comprise the sum total of the wizard's work, for lo, the slave slips a hand under his gaudy girdle and fetches out a crumpled piece of paper which he eagerly hands to his master, who gravely passes it on to Jack without glancing at it, evidently recognizing the probable claim he has upon the *billet doux*.

Hardly has he glanced at the scrawl, undoubtedly

written in haste and with a lead pencil, than Jack says something that may perhaps be pardoned under the existing circumstances.

"More trouble?" asks his companion, reading the frown on his face.

"Yes—they are gone—he has taken her away, and even now they may be on some native dhow, bound for the mainland. It is cruel—a wretched half hour too late."

"A dhow you say—why should they run away from Zanzibar when the victory has been won—when British rights triumph?"

"Ah! you don't understand—he has no love for the English—you will find him as deep in the mud as Said Khalid is in the mire. Instead of hiding under cover of the German consulate he has believed it wise to skip. Hildegarde has left these few lines for me. She seemed to have had some intuition that I would come; God bless and keep her."

"Of course she did—they always do. Well, is there anything hopeful about what she writes? Suppose you read it aloud."

"I was going to. This is what she says: 'We have just learned that the palace is in ruins and Said Khalid has fled. He dares stay here no longer—you know why. I would escape, but where could

I go alone, while the streets swarm with savages? He means to board a dhow and escape to the mainland. I fear all is lost. Heaven preserve you, and if we never meet again, remember,

"'Your HILDEGARDE.'"

"H'm," says the soldier, "fairly told under such stress of circumstances. She speaks of a dhow and crossing to the mainland. Perhaps we may yet overhaul them, if we can only get a little information."

"Here are a few more words."

"Ah! a postscript. Well, that is usually the most important part of a woman's letter. Suppose you quote it."

"Question Xazier."

"Who in the deuce may Xazier be—ah! the bearer of the message—this black Mercury who carried Venus' love letter."

Then he fires a few hot shot at the slave, and draws out answers like magic.

"Eureka! he can lead us to the spot—we must lose no more time. To the water, then, with all possible speed!"

The abbreviated black seems to catch some of the contagion in Sir Roderic's excitement and enthusiasm, for he runs to the heavy door, throws down the chain that barred their progress when they

would have forced an entrance, and leads the way to the intensely crooked street.

At his heels trot the two Britons, anxious and determined.

Their course is at right angles with that by means of which they reached the place, so that in order to gain the water they do not have to pass near the ruined palace, nor even the custom house where the native soldiers in revolt served their guns as long as a shelter was left over their heads.

Luckily, no attempt is made on this trip to impede their progress, beyond a treacherous shot fired from a housetop by some rascally Arab, which, doing no damage, is not noticed.

Presently, down the lane they have a glimpse of blue water, kissed by the hot sun.

Many boats greet the eye, and it is evident that a tremendous exodus has commenced upon the part of slave-drivers and rascals in general, among whom the thunder of British guns has aroused a sensation of alarm, as of coming retribution.

There are Arabs in every dhow, their ugly yellow faces turned to where the warships can be seen, as though fearful lest flight to the mainland may be interfered with by a sudden burst of fire from their

mailed sides, when these frail little cockle-shells must be riven to splinters under the iron hail.

When Jack Gordon sees the multitude of white and dirt colored sails upon the blue water of the little bay, he is filled with an overpowering apprehension.

How may they discern among these various craft, all heading away from the Zanzibar shore, the one in particular which at the present time contains their hopes?

He would feel as though groping for a needle in a haystack; but the soldier has already taken Xazier in hand with so happy a result that the black boy is scanning the fleet with eager eyes.

Presently he emits a gurgling cry, and follows with some sounds that are utterly unintelligible to Jack.

"He says the dhow his master and the white angel are in is that one far out yonder, the one with the yellow sail," declares Sir Roderic, pointing.

At this Jack groans.

"They have too great a start. No matter what boat we secure we can never overtake them. Our wind would be their wind too. Another disappointment. He seems to win every time; but my day will come sooner or later."

"Why not pursue them anyway? Who can tell what may happen to throw us alongside? We can do our part and leave the rest," says the man who never gives up, no matter how dark and forbidding the prospect.

His enthusiasm overwhelms Gordon.

"I'm ready to follow over land or sea if it takes me to the heart of blackest Africa. Now for a boat that can skip over the water like a phantom. Where will we find it?"

"Suppose you try mine?" says an English voice close by, and the two men turn on their heel to discover the oddest figure that could well be imagined.

The speaker has evidently come out from behind an improvised fort made of bales of goods, where, armed with a repeating rifle, he has kept at bay any demoralized Arabs who might have been tempted to stray in his direction.

"By Jove!" is all Sir Roderic can say, as he surveys the genius of the hour.

CHAPTER V

LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN

Imagine a smooth-faced chap, with a mirth-provoking countenance, and a slim figure clad in the snowiest of white duck; a helmet of the same material shoved back so as to expose a curly mass of flaxen hair tinged with yellow, eyes as blue as the skies overhead, and the jauntiest general appearance compatible with dignity.

Then remember the circumstances—that this is Zanzibar instead of an American Newport or a French Nice, and the incongruity of such a dandified appearance may strike home. The young gentleman is very far away from his native heath.

For a brief interval our two friends find their breath rather taken away by the sudden appearance of this society darling on the scene of action.

Sir Roland is rather inclined to break out into one of his hearty guffaws, but when his eyes fall upon the gun which the howling swell carries in his hands, he

remembers that in all probability this odd genius has kept more than one squad of fleeing slave-drivers at bay and a certain amount of respect is mingled with his keen sense of the ridiculous.

"Pawdon me gentlemen, but me cawd-case is in me dwess suit on board the yacht. Allow me to intwoduce myself in a clumsy fashion to be sure; me name is Greene—Chauncey P. Greene, from New Yawk. If I—a—can be of any sawvice to you—a—command me. Yours truly."

"Glad to know you, sir. Shake hands. My friend, Jack Gordon. He desires to overtake one of the boats out yonder—a lady in the case, you understand—but how it can be done is another matter. You spoke of a boat—do you own one of these xebecs or dhows anchored yonder?"

"I am glad, don'tcherknow, to say I do not. Just at pwesent, the only cwaft I can claim is this little witch."

Seeing from his gestures that something has been concealed from their eyes by the pile of goods in front, Gordon and his companion step forward.

An exclamation of astonishment breaks from both as they discover a launch made of red cedar and mahogany, with brass trimmings that glisten in the sun.

At this jumping-off place of civilization such a spectacle, so common to the ports of the American sea coast, is enough to cause wonderment.

"What! a naphtha launch!" cries Gordon half fancying he must be dreaming.

"Yas," drawls the elegant Chauncey P. Greene with a heavenly smile, as though he enjoys the sensation his jaunty craft creates, "it's the genuine awticle by Jove! Bwought all the way from New Yawk by steamer and landed here. You see I've been quite enjoying meself awound these waters, until the beastly wah bwoke out. I'm living aboard now, standing off wascally Awabs bent on plunder, and awaiting the awival of the west of the pawty on the yacht, which I left at Suez, undergoing certain indispensable wepairs. When the fellahs awive it is our positive intention to explore the Zambesi to its source, and accomplish what no white man has ever before done—cwoss to the head-watahs of the Congo and descend."

The man with the yellow locks has not been idle while delivering himself of this little address.

Dropping into the launch at the stern he has given a few pumps at the engine, applied a match and started a flame.

Sir Roderic hangs over him as though decidedly taken with such an eccentric specimen of Anglophobia

while Gordon, whose mind is almost wholly wrapped up in the question as to whether they can overtake the slave dhow heading for the mainland before it reaches a safe haven, busies himself in casting off the painter which has secured the boat.

"Do you mean to say you are preparing to enter the heart of Africa with a party of exploration?" gasps the veteran hardly able to credit his senses.

"Certainly," cheerfully chirps the other as though the subject under discussion might be merely a little picnic excursion. "You see, the idea owiginated in me own bwain and I found others to agwee to take hold. Me fwiend Chandler—you pwobably know Chandler, a bwight fellah—went in on this—a—coast a couple of years ago and had a beastly bad time; so as the season was abominably tame, don'tcherknow, we determined to make a name for ourselves, and shoot a few elephants and gowillas and pwaps some sawvages, pick up a fowtune in ivowy and gold dust and weturn home to lecture and be feted."

He gives a quizzical glance up into the veteran's face while drawling out this ridiculous story, and for the life of him Cavendish is unable to decide whether the man is joking or in sober earnest.

A few more turns at the pump, a second match applied, and all is ready.

"We're off!" exclaims the obliging skipper as the screw revolves rapidly; "would you be so kind, Mr. Gordon, as to turn the wheel to the wight—just so."

Almost immediately the little craft makes half a revolution. Jack has handled a wheel before, and without any difficulty steadies her so that she speedily begins to leave the Zanzibar shore.

On all sides are native crafts, fully an hundred being in sight, most of them scurrying like a flock of frightened partridges for that mainland which offers an asylum where they may be safe from British gunboats.

Sir Roderic is more struck with the oddity of the little dude's make-up than the fact of his having remained to guard his boat through the perils of the bombardment and possible rioting apt to follow.

He feels as though the end of the world must be near at hand when so delicate a creature as Chauncey Greene strays away from his mother's apron-strings and talks of undertaking a task that has appalled many a bold explorer on account of the numberless almost insurmountable perils involved.

But the duty in hand is of such a nature that Sir Roderic finds it necessary to devote his attention to other things.

The dhow that was marked by Xazier as the one

upon which those they would overhaul have embarked has a long lead, and her sails seem to catch considerable air out where she sits upon the water, though close to the island it is almost calm.

They push along sturdily, the little marvel of Yankee ingenuity in the shape of a gas engine turning the screw with a half muffled "chug-chug-chug", that sends a thrill through her timbers; and in this way they pass boat after boat, from the sides of which dark faces glower at them, and nervous hands itch to use the Arab guns upon the hated English.

Sir Roderic has picked up the repeating rifle belonging to Greene. It is a fine piece of workmanship put together in a way few could equal and none excel. He examines the principle with the interest of a soldier. The sixteen bullets can be fired without removing the gun from the shoulder, each empty shell being ejected and a new cartridge shot into the chamber by a movement of the left hand, placed almost midway down the barrel. When Sir Roderic sees the magical name Colt upon the firearm he realizes that he has a guaranty as to the accuracy of its target qualities since his countrymen long ago learned the value of this Yankee stamp as a name with which to conjure.

The sight of the veteran with this gun in his hand,

ready to pump a broadside into any dhow from which a hostile shot may be fired, no doubt deters more than one English hating slave hunter from sending his compliments in the shape of a leaden card on board cedar launch.

So they leave boat after boat behind and begin to draw up on the marked craft.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHASE OF THE ARAB DHOW

Jack Gordon has kept a close watch upon the Zanzibar dhow ahead, although not neglecting those which they are compelled to pass. Owing to the wind being so faint they have hauled up on the fugitive boat at a lively rate, and if nothing new arises to alter the conditions, the chances of overhauling their quarry are bright indeed.

He has already noticed that the boat is of a somewhat different build from the ordinary dhows used by the Arabs in commerce, fishing, running cargoes of slaves from the mainland, or in secret piratical expeditions so common to their class.

It has something of a cabin, though the sail plan is the same as the natives.

He can see several figures on board, and is straining his eyes in the endeavor to make out their individuality when close to his elbow he hears the

drawling voice of the remarkable skipper of the magic launch.

"Ah! would you do me the honah to make use of these—a—field-glasses? I believe they are most excellent for mawine work."

Gordon accepts with the warmest of thanks, and his heart somehow feels very kindly toward the odd genius over whom a favoring Providence seems to watch.

The result is almost magical, for the boat appears close enough to be within hail, and every man on board looms up distinctly.

Sir Roderic is waiting to hear a report.

"They have quite a crew—I can see six or seven men, all Arabs. The captain is pointing to us, and holds a gun in his hand. It looks as if they have suspicions as to our intentions, and may be getting ready to give us a warm reception. He talks with some one in the cabin—there, a head is thrust out of the door. My friend, we have made no mistake—those I seek are surely on board that dhow that endeavors to show us a clean pair of heels. The next question is whether we can land the fish after the hook is struck home."

He hands the glass to Sir Roderic, who proceeds to examine the fugitive craft with the air of a con-

noisseur, for though no sailor by profession, the veteran has spent much time afloat, and is no novice in seamanship.

"An ugly crowd upon my soul, and if it comes to open war, we need not let conscience trouble us when compelled to throw a few shot aboard. That captain is as beastly a looking pirate as ever went unhung. He reminds me of a chap who boarded a brig I was on off the Malay coast—and a right royal battle we had—twice the pirates swarmed on our decks, and only the rising wind saved us. I had the pleasure of introducing my sword between the leader's fourth and fifth ribs, and of seeing him jump overboard. Never knew whether he lived or died, but the sight of this rascal makes me believe Satan saved his life, for two such ugly devils could never be fashioned. But something white is fluttering from the rear cabin window. Now it is gone—no, it appears again. Come, your sight is better than mine—perhaps you can tell whether it is a lady's handkerchief."

Gordon almost snatches the marine glasses, while the other two exchange a significant glance, and Chauncey rolls his eyes in a suggestive manner, as though he is in a condition to commiserate one who has been seized in Cupid's toils.

Jack immediately announces that it is a delicate handkerchief waving as a signal, and at once holds aloft his own, hoping thus to waft new courage to the fair Hildegarde should it be her hand which floats the dainty web.

Then he grows more uneasy—really, the faint breeze must be freshening, for they do not seem to be overtaking the dhow as rapidly as before.

He scans the sky, and each tiny cloud appears to grow in size until imagination creates a tempest in a teapot.

To the others these things are more vague, and as yet they see no reason to believe the little launch will not presently overhaul the leading craft.

What then?

Are they prepared to board the dhow, with possibly half a score of savage Arabs armed to the teeth on her decks, ready with pistol and yataghan and kriss to repel boarders?

This brings the soldier to his senses.

It is time they were deciding as to their plan of campaign, since the success or failure of the enterprise may result from the manner in which they fashion their attack. He turns to the unique and original Greene.

His one Colt's repeating rifle is a good thing to

have, but even such a standard weapon can hardly awe a boat load of cruel slave-hunters, accustomed to deviltry in all its forms, and fashioned into hard fighters by the very character of the environments by which they have always been surrounded.

When he mentions the lack of an armory to the man in white, a bland smile sweeps over the boyish face of Chauncey P. Greene.

"Ah! would you mind stepping this way, your lawdship," he drawls, for having heard Gordon mention Sir Roderic's name he has been shrewd enough to lay hold.

The veteran obeys with alacrity, wondering what new wonders are about to be disclosed to his eyes.

Inside the little cabin they bend over a locker, which being opened discloses half a dozen rifles, *fac similes* of the one with which young Greene has kept guard over his craft while England's navy shelled the rebel strongholds.

The soldier grunts his satisfaction.

Nor is this the end, for, as the jaunty skipper removes a canvas cover, behold a little brass yacht gun, mounted and presenting quite a formidable appearance.

Sir Roderic rubs his eyes.

"See here, is this a gunboat on a secret mission to

subdue Southern Africa? Bless my eyes, the whole outfit looks suspicious. I presume this is intended for your yacht, a saluting gun such as they use?"

"Not wholly, milord. Yonder box is filled with pwojectiles with a sting to them," remarks the proud owner.

So, Sir Roderic, raising the lid beholds brass shells each of which is actually charged with a deadly messenger.

"Superb! we can meet a whole fleet of the rascally pirates without fear. Did you ever intend firing this little growler on board the launch?" he queries, eagerly.

"There is a place pwepared, forward of the wheel, also back of the engine, where the little monstah may be lashed fast."

"Huzza! then we might as well get him on deck."

Saying which, the man of muscle bends down and actually raises gun, block and all, apparently with ease, while poor Greene, who has never carried much more than his walking stick in his blessed life, and ofttimes found even that a grievous burden, looks on in sheer amazement.

Gordon springs to the assistance of his new-found friend, and between them the brass beauty is fastened just abaft the wheel.

Really, this begins to look like business. The veteran's face is aglow, either from the strain he has just undergone, or because he scents battle in the air—such a son of Mars could not find himself on the verge of open warfare and remain unmoved.

They have now out-footed every boat of the fleet that is headed towards the coast, save the leading dhow, which of course is the one upon which their interest is centered.

This craft is only a quarter of a mile ahead of them, and if the morning breeze continues to hold aloof in this truly remarkable manner, they can draw alongside their quarry long ere the latter reaches the African shore, now looming up plainly before them.

All await the sequel with impatience, but Jack Gordon naturally counts the minutes as they drag by. In his mind they are shod with lead, and the little boat creeps instead of spins through the water as she ought.

Nearer still.

The Arabs on board cluster along the side and view them with exceeding wonder.

Perhaps many of them have never before set eyes on such a neat little trick as this polished gas-motor craft, and wonder what power sends her through

the waters at such race-horse speed, with not an atom of smoke rising to mark her progress.

Other keen orbs may have by this time detected the small brass cannon forward, and its presence would naturally arouse something of alarm.

A consultation is held between the three members of the launch's crew, and it is decided that their policy must be to advance on a line with the laboring dhow, so that in case it is necessary to fire the cannon, care can be taken to aim at the stem instead of the stern, for they do not forget that someone very precious to Gordon occupies the cabin aft.

This takes more minutes.

The breeze freshens a trifle, and by the time they have hauled up abeam, separated by some hundreds of yards, the shore is not over a mile or so away—the shore of the great continent that for ages past has been almost a sealed book to the civilized world, until such men as Livingstone and Stanley pierced the heart of it. By the time a few more such bold modern explorers as Chauncey P. Greene and his fellow sportsmen devote their energies to the task, the once dark continent will have become a familiar stamping ground to all the chappies and Johnnies on both sides of the Atlantic, for it threatens to be a fad

among them, this devotion to Arctic and African exploration.

"Suppose we send a shot acwoss their bow in good old man-o'-wah style as a signal to them to come to?" suggests the skipper, proud of a chance to air his knowledge of sea etiquette.

"Can you manage it, young sir?" asks Sir Roderic.

"Ah—excuse me—I would wather you took entire chawge of the little beauty, your lawdship."

"It's a go, then," declares the soldier, quickly. He bends over and glances along the shining barrel.

"Look out!"

Then comes a tremendous report under which the launch quivers from stem to stern post.

CHAPTER VII

HOW JACK FOUND HILDEGARDE

All of them look eagerly to see what the result of the shot may be.

Just in front of the large dhow a great splash of water announces where the projectile has struck.

"Well aimed!" declares Gordon.

"She's a dandy, a cwacker-jack!" says the enthusiastic skipper, referring in this rather incongruous manner to the yacht cannon.

Sir Roderic smiles grimly as though pleased at the result of his first shot, and stoops down to secure another cartridge.

"The beggah shows no sign of laying-to. Ah, it looks as though the wascally Awabs may not be aware of the meaning of that shot. We shall have to sink the blessed cwaft, by Jove!" remarks Greene.

"They seem to be wildly excited over something. I declare I believe they mean to send a volley this

way. Perhaps it might be as well for us to drop down out of sight, temporarily," suggests Jack.

It is a wise move on their part, for even as they tumble, puffs of smoke appear here and there along the side of the Arab dhow, and the reports of guns can be plainly heard blending in a rattling volley.

One or two of the leaden messengers come aboard, making a few splinters, but fortunately doing no material damage, since the boat has been especially made to order, and her vital points are sheathed in such a way that no rifle bullet can find entrance.

Still, the patter of these missiles is very suggestive and the hot reception serves to admonish our friends as to what awaits them should they attempt to board the dhow.

Plainly, other tactics must be brought into play in order to gain their end.

All eyes are turned upon the little cannon, as though in this lie their hopes.

"What do you say, Gordon—must we try to sink her?" demands Sir Roderic.

"There is no other way?"

"I know of none. We can never board, for armed as they are we could be shot down in cold blood before reaching her deck."

"Then do what you think best."

"Good."

They have lain almost motionless while this brief conversation has been in progress, Greene having shut off most of the power, and the soldier is enabled to manipulate the boat by means of the wheel so that the little gun slowly draws near the bow of the slaver.

Suddenly he pulls the cord again.

"Down!" cries Gordon, as more shots sound immediately after the roar of the cannon, and once again they hear lead whistling overhead, splashing in the water, or striking some part of the vessel.

Before dropping they have been gratified at seeing splinters fly from the bow of the sailing craft, showing that Sir Roderic's science of gunnery has not been without positive results, and when the fusilade from on board ceases, their eager gaze, as they raise their heads again, is turned in that quarter.

Greene claps the marine glasses to his eyes, and immediately bawls:

"By Jove! cut the whole stem out of her, clean as a whistle, don'tcherknow. She must be leaking like a sieve."

The others can see this much with their naked eyes. They see more, for upon the deck of the slave

dhow the Arabs are running about in the wildest confusion, undoubtedly panic stricken by the disaster that has befallen their craft.

Sir Roderic calmly drops another cartridge into the breach.

"These are good material, Mr. Greene," he remarks, as though the result is more to be credited to that fact than his ability.

"Ah — yas — Amewican manufacture — beats the world, you know," says the skipper, who shows that while he may be a swell of the first water, he has no desire to go back on his native country by following the prevailing craze of Anglophobia, which has attacked so many of his mates.

Although the Briton may have his own ideas on that subject he realizes that this is neither the time nor the place to ventilate such views—indeed, Yankee ammunition is good enough for him just at such a crisis in their affairs.

"Steady!" as he again swerves the boat and aims his brass pet.

One more deafening detonation, followed by a shout from Gordon, and echoing cries of dismay in the direction of the dhow.

"You've torn the whole bow away—her doom is

now settled," says Jack, eagerly, for it is a time of great suspense with him.

"Good for the bull-dog," chuckles the man whose manipulation of the barker has been marked by such astonishing results.

"We had better work a little closer so as to be ready for any emergency," suggests Jack.

So Chauncey starts the screw to its full capacity, and they push through the water in the direction of the stricken dhow.

There can be no possible doubt as to the fate of the slaver—she must be taking water at a lively rate, for already one end of her is higher in the water than the other, and there can be seen a perceptible slant to her masts. All of which pleases the fighting man immensely—he is as delighted over his work as any boy, and does not hesitate to show it in sundry ways.

Having charged the "little growler" once more, he busies himself in seeing that every one has a gun placed in his hands, with a magazine fully charged, for it seems that our Chauncey, when the danger of an attack became imminent, amused himself with charging every gun in order to have the means at hand for a sturdy defense.

The excitement on board the doomed craft has

augmented instead of decreased. They seem to be lowering a boat, and even fight among themselves, as wild spirits generally do when demoralized.

As our friends creep closer they can hear loud voices and Arabic curses that are enough to make the blood run cold, while arms are brandished in the air as the ship's company fight over the right of being the first to enter the boat.

If given a chance these fellows will easily make the near-by shore, or else be picked up by some other friendly slave trader.

There, the boat has been launched, as a great splash announces, and the half-naked Arabs begin to tumble into it with desperate zeal. The panic is contagious, and each man vies with his neighbors in energy. Sharks usually swarm in these waters between Zanzibar and Madagascar, and the Arabs have a wholesome fear of their jaws.

"Closer still," mutters Gordon, swinging the launch around so as to sweep about the stern of the sinking craft.

Now they open up the other side, and discover the boat. It seems to be filled with a motley assortment of rascally Arabs. Some have taken hold of the oars, and begin to pull with a vim that attests their ambition to gain the shore. Others are crouch-

ing or standing there, thinking only of leaving the doomed dhow.

Eager eyes scan the heavily laden boat, ranging from one end to the other.

"Do you see her?" asks Jack, huskily, his face white with mingled hope and fear.

"There is no woman in the boat," declares Sir Roderic firmly, and Greene echoes his words.

"Then we have deceived ourselves—she is not on board after all," groans the lover.

"But you saw him—the man."

"That is true, and I believe he sits in yonder boat with his rascally friends, as thoroughly crazed with fear as they are."

"Perhaps she—Hildegarde you called her, may be still aboard the dhow."

Jack looks at the boat.

"Good Heavens! and how fast it is sinking. It will go down before our very eyes, and if she is there, perhaps in a swoon, she is lost!"

"There is still time to see—lay us alongside without delay."

Straight for the abandoned craft the launch is headed at full speed. Jack hands over the wheel to Sir Roderic, and crawling out from under the cabin canopy, crouches there in the extreme bow, ready

to make a leap when they shall have gained the proper distance.

The Arabs, finding they are not to be pursued, and perhaps guessing at this late hour what the cause of their trouble may be, halt upon their oars, as if to watch the men of the mosquito craft, to discover what they will do.

It would have been better for them to have kept straight on, as subsequent events prove; but they appear to be in the course of a dhow bearing down on the scene of action, for which they evidently wait.

Meanwhile the launch has run alongside the sinking craft.

Owing to the bow filling, her stern is higher out of the water than usual.

Gordon is ready, and making a leap, finds himself on board.

At another time the young Briton might feel some apprehension at the singular conditions by which he is confronted, for there is an appalling sense of danger in a deck tilted to an angle of even ten degrees, while the horrible gurgle of the inrushing flood is suggestive of imminent disaster.

Just now, however, every thought of personal dan-

ger is swamped by the possibility of the girl he loves being aboard this foundering craft.

No sooner does he scramble aboard and gain his footing than he makes a dash in the direction of the cabin.

A figure crawling up out of the open hatch amidships confronts him—a figure covered with hair and with a broken chain dangling from one leg—a veritable Old Man of the Woods, in which Jack recognizes a chimpanzee, such as may be met with in the tropical forests of Africa, and which the Arabs had trapped, no doubt, with the intention of disposing of him to some collector of wild beasts.

The animal has burst his chains, as if knowing by instinct of the doom that threatens to overwhelm him.

Jack has no use for the beast and only desires to be let alone; but ill treatment has given the chimpanzee a fierce hatred for the whole race of bipeds, and nothing will do him but a test of strength then and there.

As the uncouth creature blocks the entrance to the cabin, nothing remains for Jack but to go at him hammer and tongs, for into that cabin he is determined to make his way in spite of every obstacle.

Considering how limited his time may be, this

encounter is doubly unfortunate; but heroic treatment is sometimes the only way in which a disease may be mastered.

Gordon has divested himself of the various assortment of weapons picked up in the street of Zanzibar, so that he might be the better able to board the vessel.

His eye has fallen upon a native kriss, which some fellow dropped in his haste to depart, and snatching this up he assails the beast with a daring he might not have shown had the conditions been less desperate.

Possibly a more singular adventure never befel a son of Briton than this battle which is forced upon Gordon on board a steadily sinking Zanzibar dhow.

He slashes and cuts and bewilders the big brute, taking good care to keep beyond the reach of his long fore-arms, for once in their embrace nothing could save him.

Perhaps the animal is weakened by confinement, with scanty food—it may be the strange nature of the surroundings has something to do with his lack of zeal, for in his own forest the chimpanzee fears nothing that walks on earth.

Be the cause what it may, when Jack has administered several smarting wounds with his razor-

edged kriss, the shambling brute backs off, making hideous faces and uttering plaintive little moans.

Now the coast is clear, but a precious minute has been lost.

Jack drops the blade that has served him such a good turn, and pushes through the cabin entrance filled with the liveliest anticipations.

Hungrily his eyes roam around the interior and then he gives a groan.

The cabin seems to be empty—then his hopes have after all been a hollow mockery.

But stay—surely that is a little foot peeping out from behind yonder curtain which evidently conceals a berth of some sort.

He flies across the sloping floor and dashes the tapestry aside. There, lying upon an Oriental divan, tumbled with Daghestan pillows, he discovers his Hildegarde.

The suspense under which he has labored gives way to a wild delirium of joy, since Heaven has heard his prayer.

For the moment he forgets the deadly danger that hovers over them—he only knows that here is the loveliest girl in all the wide world, and that it has been his happy fortune to save her from an impending disaster.

So he bends over and kisses her with the freedom of one who knows his affection is reciprocated.

The caress must have some power over her mind, for immediately a pair of hazel eyes are fastened upon Gordon in mute amazement.

"I have come for you, my Hildegarde—it is Jack Gordon in the flesh—don't be alarmed," he hastens to say, fearful lest she may swoon again.

Then a pair of arms cling about his neck—it were surely worth a meeting with even a ferocious chimpanzee to receive such a reward.

"Oh! Jack, thank God you have come. I feared all was lost—I felt the ship sinking and knew no more."

"But we must leave here—every second is precious. Can you walk with my assistance? I beg of you to try. Should the boat sink with us in the cabin, all is lost indeed. Come, oh come."

His words, his presence, enthuse her with a renewal of strength.

She gains her feet, and with Jack at her side pushes towards the exit.

The craft gives a sudden lurch, and Jack cries out in alarm, feeling that the crucial moment is at hand.

But they gain the outside—the dhow is quivering like an animal in the last throes of dissolution, when

Gordon, dragging or assisting his companion reache the deck.

Any second may see the end.

He reaches the side of the boat where the launch was left when he sprang aboard, but Chauncey Greene has feared lest they be swamped and everything lost, when the dhow goes down, so that he has backed away some twenty yards.

At sight of Jack and the girl upon the deck, he would once more advance, but it is too late.

The sinking vessel gives a plunge, and the practiced eye of the veteran soldier knows just what is coming.

"Jump—jump—we'll save you, Jack," he sends over the water in his roaring tones.

Gordon hears—he knows it is the one last thing left to them, with the chances on a par, and does not hesitate. The dhow is even now going down, and in another moment all must be over.

Grasping Hildegarde with one arm, he springs as far as possible from the side of the craft, and as the two strike the water of that tropical sea, there is a crash of timbers as the confined air bursts open the deck, a mighty whirl of waters, and the dhow has gone to a bourne where slave cargoes are unknown—the bottom of the Indian ocean.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM SLAVER TO SHARK

Even while spurred on to superhuman efforts by the consciousness that the life of the maid he loves is endangered as well as his own, Jack Gordon at first finds extreme difficulty in holding his own.

The suction is powerful as the Arab dhow goes down into the depths—a dozen hands seemed to have laid hold with the intention of dragging him after the engulfed craft.

Such a sensation must come to the unlucky seaman in the grip of an octopus.

His desperate struggles bear fruit, however, and presently he finds himself in the midst of boiling, bubbling water, with numerous floating objects, the flotsam and jetsam swept from the deck of the dhow.

Quick to grasp an opportunity, he seizes upon a friendly hatch and feels that he has saved not only himself but a life far more precious—that of Hildegarde. Apparently the only danger they need now

fear is from sharks, and that this peril is not an imaginary one can be seen from the presence of a couple of sword-like dorsal fins that cleave the water in erratic circles.

The monsters of the deep scent their prey. Perhaps the dreaded leopard shark of the warm Indian ocean haunts this tropical coast near Zanzibar.

Chauncey has seen those who battle for life amid the waves that mark the spot where the Arab boat went down, and he immediately sends the launch toward them.

Sir Roderic is at the wheel, but the veteran allows his eyes to wander toward the significant dorsal fins that speed this way and that with such remarkable rapidity.

He anticipates trouble in that quarter, for in times gone by Sir Roderic has had adventures with just such savage monsters of the deep, so that he knows what to expect.

While he steadies the little wheel he holds in his hands one of the rifles with which Greene and his party of convivial spirits anticipate doing such fell execution among the wild denizens of the Zambesi regions.

Suddenly there comes a change in the maneuvers of the fin-de-circle marine pirates.

They cease cutting eccentric circles, and start in a direct course for the very spot where the boat vanished under the green waters.

There is no need for Sir Roderic to hazard a guess as to what this movement means—the sharks have located their intended prey and are on the war path.

Unless something is done to divert their attention a tragedy is imminent.

Fortunately the veteran is prepared for just such an emergency, and throwing the Colts repeater to his shoulder he opens a hot fusillade.

Shark skin may be a pretty tough article of commerce, but it can not resist the powerful projectiles hurled from that triumph of a modern gunsmith's art and ere the marksman has distributed more than half a dozen shots impartially among them, both scavengers of the deep find they have business elsewhere that demands their immediate attention. All this has happened in an exceedingly brief space of time.

The launch has covered over half the distance separating them from those in the water, which, disturbed no longer by the eddies marking the whirlpool where the luckless dhow went down, has resumed its normal and placid condition.

At this juncture several guns sound in the direction of the boat containing the fugitive Arabs.

The missiles splash the water around the head of the heroic Gordon, who hangs to the hatch and sustains his helpless burden.

Sir Roderic's blood boils with indignation at the heartless atrocity of the act—nothing is too mean or low for an Arab to attempt. He would visit speedy retribution upon the vandals only for the fact that his first duty is to rescue those who are in triple peril from drowning, from the hungry maw of a shark, and last, but far from least, the bullets of vengeful Mohammedan slave-drivers.

Before another shot can be fired the launch has come between, thus presenting a shield against murderous bullets.

Gordon refuses to be rescued until he has seen Hildegarde taken over the side of the boat—then, with a little assistance, he emerges from the sea like a modern Triton, and tumbles aboard.

"Deuced sorry to soil your boat so Mr. Greene," he sputters while the water drips from his trowser legs in small rivers.

"Whisper it not in Gath, my deah boy. This boat will see fah worse service than that I assure you, befoh we are done. Bang! there goes another shot—I do

believe the wetches must be making a tawget out of you, sir. Better get out of sight—the lady needs your attention, I imagine."

Jack no longer worries about his drenched appearance, but jumping into the cabin bends over Hildegarde.

She is cognizant of what is going on, though Jack had believed her senseless when in the water. She knows she owes her life to him and at his approach arouses herself to greet him with a warm smile which if not exactly radiant is as near that condition as the circumstances will admit.

Hildegarde may not look her best in the drenched state that inevitably follows her submersion in the sea; but to Jack's ravished eyes she could never appear other than an angelic creature.

Their past has been marked with more singular happenings than fall to the lot of most lovers, and perhaps the future may also have much that is full of peril for them; but it is enough for Jack to realize at this moment that he has saved her from a cruel death, that she loves him alone, and for the present their tribulations are hull down on the horizon.

Meanwhile, leaving the lovers to condole with each other over their rather ludicrous appearance, dripping with the briny water of the sea, we had better

turn our attention "on deck," where events are hastily shaping themselves for further action.

Sir Roderic has been grinding his teeth all this while over the inhuman act of the piratical crew in firing at the helpless ones struggling in the water. That scurvy trick is a piece of business he can not forgive or overlook, and every fibre of his being calls out for instant retaliation. Such vampires must be taught a lesson. The Briton is a soldier born and bred, whose motto, nurtured amid scenes almost barbaric, has in a measure partaken of the old precept of the desert, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

Thus boiling over with hot indignation his first thought after the rescue of Gordon and his sweetheart has been effected turns toward impressing upon the vandal Arabs the punishment Anglo-Saxons may bestow on those who pass beyond the reasonable bounds of warfare.

And the means to inflict this stern lesson is fortunately close at hand.

Sir Roderic's steel-gray eyes fairly snap with the grim determination that possesses his soul as he begins to turn the launch so that the little craft will head toward the boat load of dusky Arabs, once the crew of the sunken slave dhow.

CHAPTER IX

BRAVO! SIR RODERIC!

These events, which have taken so much time to narrate, really occur in a brief interval. Possibly not more than three minutes have elapsed between the sinking of the disabled slaver, and the rescue of Jack with his Hildegarde.

The other dhows have of course been approaching meanwhile, under a quickening wind, and presently one of them promises to pick up the boat laden with dusky fugitives, who have shown their lack of the commonest decencies by firing at helpless persons struggling in the water, just as a duck hunter might endeavor to stop a cripple he fears is about to escape him.

Perhaps a guilty conscience arouses the fears of the men in the boat when they see the naphtha launch gradually heading toward them. The sun glitters from the little brass orator on her forward deck, and they have already had ample demonstra-

tion concerning the effective qualities of speech possessed by that same brazen-tongued wizard.

They wave their arms and shout, carrying on like a party of ignorant natives from the depths of an African wilderness, who imagine that the more noise they make the greater the fear they inspire.

Bah! Sir Roderic only views them with contempt, and scorns to notice their gestures that may be taken either for threats or insults.

The launch no longer sweeps around in a circle, but becomes steady.

One great shout arises from the men in the boat, as though they anticipate what is about to take place.

Several are seen leaping overboard, ready to run the risk of sharks' teeth rather than find themselves in the direct line of flight taken by a missile from the little brass terror.

They are wise men who thus decide on the spur of the moment, for while the shout of the Arabs yet rings over the water, the roar of young Greene's yacht cannon drowns all other sounds.

By this time the skipper of the jaunty craft has overcome that intense feeling of astonishment that marked the amazing results of Sir Roderic's earlier shots—he has grown to expect success to follow each

discharge, and has the most positive reliance in both the gun and the remarkable man who handles it.

Nor is his confidence misplaced.

The boat has gone, shattered by the ball that struck it squarely in the stern, and possibly ripped keel and garboard streaks and even another lap clean away.

In the water men are struggling and shouting. A new alarm has seized upon them now, remembering the sharks. Perhaps no friendly hand will send a shower of leaden pellets at monsters attracted by desperate struggles in the sea.

At least they are spared one infliction—no one returns their wanton act, and endeavors to pick them off as they bob up and down on the waves, while striking out for the nearest dhow.

The discharge of the brass piece has brought Gordon on deck, and when he discovers what has been done, his first act is to pick up the marine glasses, through which he watches closely as each dripping fugitive is hauled over the side of the rescuing dhow.

"Only seven—then two have gone down to Davy Jones's locker, food for the sharks," sings out the tall figure at the wheel, with as much *sang froid* as though he refers to a brace of pheasants or partridges that fell to his gun.

"Poor shawks!" says Chauncey, with one of his inimitably doleful looks.

"I was in hope *he* might be among the missing, but the devil looks after his own every time," declares Jack.

"Then you've seen him get aboard?" asks the soldier, to whose eye the dripping figures ascending like so many Neptunes from the waters of the deep, have been much alike.

"Unfortunately, yes. He's still on deck, and while that man lives there is no peace for us, meaning of course Hildegarde and myself."

Sir Roderic's curiosity is whetted, for he is sure there must be as strange a story back of it all as ever was heard.

The time is hardly propitious for such a recital, however, and he can well afford to wait, knowing that when the proper occasion presents itself he will hear all.

Meanwhile, such is the power of this singular friendship which has sprung up like a mushroom, that any one who is Jack's enemy must count him as arrayed on Gordon's side.

Blood is thicker than water, and they who speak the same tongue must ever be bound together in the ties of brotherhood, such as an Englishman rarely

feels for a Frenchman, a German, Italian or Russian.

True, the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race have on several occasions indulged in rather severe and drastic antics for members of one family; but the last occurrence of this sort took place over fourscore of years ago, and in the time when the cousins hardly knew each other as now. Besides, family quarrels sometimes cause respect and a cementing of bonds.

All of which philosophy and moralizing has but a vague connection with the situation of the three adventurous Anglo-Saxons whose fortunes we have followed along with the crash of battle in Zanzibar, and after the defeat of Said Khalid's insurgent force.

When affairs have reached this stage, it would appear as though our friends might have clear sailing before them.

The god of battle, however, is not yet satisfied with what has been done, but demands more sacrifices.

If given their choice our friends would peacefully proceed upon their way to the east, and, wind and wave permitting, bring up at Zanzibar some time in the afternoon of the day marked by the first bombardment from British guns along this east coast of Africa, destined to witness many strange scenes in

the greedy rush that is being made to secure slices of virgin territory for colonization purposes among the great nations.

There are others who desired to have a hand in the game.

A number of the fugitive slave dhows have come up under the increasing wind, until they form what might be called a crescent, giving promise of inclosing the launch within its two horns or wings.

On board these boats are many savage warriors who sided with Said Khalid in his defiance, and who stood manfully at their guns up to the time the fortifications were destroyed, when, believing it was a case of every man for himself, they made a rush for the boats awaiting such an exodus, and set sail for the mainland, which, being under Germany's rule, would afford any of England's enemies an asylum.

These disgruntled soldiers of the worsted usurper are in anything but an angelic state of mind just at present.

They have, from a constantly decreasing distance, been deeply interested witnesses to the singular sea duel between those on the little launch and their compatriots belonging to the dhow.

When the latter went down the incident created

consternation among the spectators, as fierce cries from various quarters attested.

Then came the later prompt retaliation on the part of Sir Roderic for the cowardly firing upon Jack while in the water.

Doubtless when the swarthy fellows who hung over the sides and bows of the dhows saw the amazing disaster which overtook the offenders in the small boat, they experienced a sense or qualm of alarm, though this was quickly overwhelmed by the fierce burst of passionate hatred for everything English.

Now they mean mischief—the launch is apparently in the toils, and it will give these runaways a certain savage satisfaction to be able to strike one blow for the lost cause of Said Khalid.

So sails are trimmed, loud voices ring out over the sea, and the two wings of the fleet start to close in, as though they would crush the dainty boat fashioned upon the bank of the far away Hudson, between the upper and nether millstones.

CHAPTER X

THE LAST OF THE SLAVE-HUNTERS

The man of war jumps to conclusions when he hears the shouts that are passed from one to another of the boats. He realizes that it is the intention of the slave-hunters to entrap them by forming a cordon with the dhows. When this has been accomplished the rest can easily be imagined, since such a quality as mercy never enters the brain of an Arab.

It is evident that they must run the gantlet one way or another, and if they escape the shower of bullets that will presently come aboard them, fortune is surely in their favor.

Much must depend upon the manner in which the launch is handled—upon himself, since the wheel is wholly in his charge.

One sweeping survey gives him a mental grasp upon the situation, by which he will presently profit.

He takes into consideration the wind, the position

of each slave dhow, and various other matters calculated to have a bearing upon the ultimate result.

All this while the little launch is bustling along with a merry "chug-chug-chug" as though bent upon mighty important business, and determined to get there in spite of a dozen hostile craft.

Already a shot has been fired from the nearest dhow and the messenger of hate sings a song very close to the ears of the old pilot, who calmly swings his wheel to port and heads the launch almost directly at the vessel from which the bullet came.

Bang! goes the yacht "angel", and a rattling discharge from further toward the rear tells the story that Gordon and Greene, cousins with hands across the sea, have taken up.

Right merrily they pump those wonderful specimens of the gunmakers' art and on board the sailing craft the utmost confusion ensues as a result of such warm attention.

Besides, the soldier has planted a ball about the stem of the dhow that evidently threatens a repetition of the disaster by means of which the first piratical craft was caused to founder.

He is not done—on the contrary he has only begun his system of tactics.

Before he has finished the little gun will have been

heated to the danger point and that box of brass cartridges considerably reduced in quantity.

He claps in another, and succeeds in making a ten strike, elevating the cannon by means of an adjustment for that purpose and planting a ball in the mast. Down comes the whole unwieldy mast with its sail covering the deck and those who crouch there in abject terror.

The dhow is evidently a wreck and they no longer have any reason to consider such a boat as being in existence when making calculations for running the gantlet.

Jack Gordon sends a whoop out over the water when he sees the amazing result of the veteran's work, for no man could have a share in such a hot engagement and not feel his blood on fire.

Even Chauncey, who has been working the lever of his repeater for all he is worth, feels it incumbent upon him to let out a war-cry that, in his funny voice, could be said to more resemble a cackle than anything else.

"That's Yankee powdah and ball, you black beggahs—we make it up to date, and don't you forget it. And it's a son of St. George that sends it with his compliments. By Jove! more of the hornets let loose," as a bullet glances from the little stack of the motor,

leaving an ugly dent, and another cuts the ambient atmosphere in close proximity to his ear.

It is true—undaunted by the remarkable disaster that has befallen their fellows who struggle desperately under the fallen sail—the crew of another boat, built somewhat after the model of a Chinese junk, have commenced to test their long Arab guns.

Perhaps the weapons may not be exactly up to date but they can send a bullet with as much force as most modern rifles.

The trouble lies with those who handle them.

No Arab has ever yet won renown as a marksman, their forte being more in the line of extraordinary sword play and the handling of horses, for most of them ride like Centaurs.

It is this poverty in the line of skill with firearms that saves our little party from serious wounds. True, the warm *billet doux* hustle around them with the business hum of hornets on the mad rampage, but it would only be by mere hard luck that a random ball found them out.

At any rate the experience being unpleasant they are not in a mood to let it grow.

Then comes the survivor of the Crimea, the man who led in the charge at Balaklava, who won the Cross at Inkerman, the hero of a dozen wars with

his little yacht cannon and plants a friendly ball aboard the junk, being very impartial with his favors; while the others continue the concert by a rattling discharge from the rifles.

This is war in earnest—a naval engagement of the first water—even if it never figures in the affair at Zanzibar in the history of British colonization.

Other dhows join in, though the distance is too great to admit of the miserable marksmen aboard having the remotest chance of making a center shot—indeed, if they manage to strike the launch at all, and not some friendly boat on the opposite side of the line, they may call it lucky.

Again Sir Roderic sends his compliments aboard the junk, and it can be seen that the exceeding warmth of his greeting has already created intense excitement among those who are the recipients of his favors, for the bombardment is having an effect that is very convincing.

The associated slave-hunters and fugitives from Zanzibar have failed in one thing—the line which had come sweeping up with the design of crushing the defiant little Yankee launch like an egg-shell, has become broken and demoralized because of the failure of the junk and the disabled dhow to hold their places which represented the keystone in the arch.

When this important position, upon which so much depends, is thrown into utter confusion, the two flanks can not be expected to remedy the disaster.

Indeed, with a rising wind, the various craft seem to have all they want to take care of in looking after themselves.

Thus Sir Roderic's bold tactics in plunging squarely into the melee promise success.

Another, more cautious, might have attempted to run away from the fleet, but this must have proven speedily disastrous, because of the field being limited by the proximity of the African coast, and the freshening wind allowing the slave dhows, with their immense spread of sail, to skim along even faster than the capacity of the naphtha launch allowed.

Again heroic treatment has proven the wiser course. It has always been the policy of this battle-scarred veteran to take the bull by the horns rather than attempt flight.

While they are passing the junk, and exchanging compliments with her crew, there is a brief interval of suspense.

Gordon has emptied the magazine of his gun, but there is no lack of opportunity afforded him to continue the hot fire which keeps the junk under subjection, since other rifles lie within reach; and with

hardly a delay of three seconds he has opened a new reservoir of lead.

No doubt the Arabs are intensely excited over the wonderful display made by the three Anglo-Saxons in the launch.

They may know a very little about the amazing repeating qualities of the up-to-date weapon, or it is possible that they have hitherto been densely ignorant on that subject. This can never be said of them again. In this brief interval they learn more about what the world-conquering race is capable of accomplishing than all the years of their previous existence taught them.

Those on the junk have ere now ceased to consider the idea of running the launch down.

Indeed, the only thing that concerns them, one and all, is to see how nearly they can flatten themselves out like pan-cakes when they hug the deck of their craft, and every time the brass cannon sounds, a roar of frightened voices attests to the feeling of alarm which has overwhelmed the crew.

So they speed past, the terrible Scylla and Charybdis that threatened destruction having been wrecked on the one side and silenced on the part of the junk.

Gordon, seeing the last of this danger passing to the rear is ready to cheer most lustily, and the skip-

per snatching out an American flag from a locker, waves it proudly in the breeze, while his falsetto voice adds piquancy to the resonant shout of the Briton.

As for Sir Roderic, he has not yet done—it goes against his grain to run away. So he makes a half circle with the launch until her bow and consequently the cannon points toward the hostile fleet, when Chauncey is signaled to back the engine.

Thus they retreat with their face to the foe, and in a position to show their teeth, which method Sir Roderic afterwards declares became engrafted in his system when campaigning with that hero of the Afghan war, valiant General Roberts.

He sends a couple of parting shots after the Arabs, just to keep them in good humor and remind them as to what they must expect when handling the hardy men of Anglo-Saxon blood.

By rare good fortune one of these balls disables the mast of another boat, to the ecstatic delight of Chauncey, who insists upon wringing Sir Roderic's hand with both of his and declaring the whole outfit has already repaid him for every dollar of its cost.

The war veteran asserts that luck favored him greatly but the others have their own opinion about that. They believe those dusky sons of Arabia will

be ready to swear that none but a wizard could have hurled those little cannon balls with such disastrous results.

And so they circle around and head for distant Zanzibar—the little launch rising and falling gallantly upon the waves, which, with each passing minute, continue to increase in size as the wind gathers fresh power.

BOOK TWO

LOVE AND WAR'S ALARMS

CHAPTER XI

WELL WON

Gordon has secured a traveling rug, which the Yankee skipper produced from one of the wonderful lockers of the little launch, and this he wraps around Hildegarde with the tender solicitude love alone can arouse.

Chauncey and the veteran are together at the wheel, and with rare delicacy ignore the presence of the lovers, while they comment in low voices upon various features connected with their remarkable enterprise.

The rising wind gives the amateur skipper some cause for uneasiness.

A naphtha launch of thirty feet in length is hardly the boat with which to navigate the big waters of the Indian ocean.

In calm weather it might not make much difference, but let a blow come up and the danger is great, since hurricanes are a dreaded factor in the navigation of these almost tropical waters.

Sir Roderic understands what the possibilities are even better than his companion, since experience has taught him to have a healthy respect for the mighty giant over whose bosom the navies and fleets of the world glide.

He too surveys the sky and the surrounding waste of water a little dubiously.

To all appearances they are about to have a blow, and such a mosquito craft would be much better off in a snug harbor while the wind creeps across the broad channel between the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba and the coast of Africa.

Even had a chance offered to make shelter behind some projecting spur of land they would hardly dare risk it, since the fugitives from Zanzibar could be expected to be keenly on the alert for an opportunity by which they might recoup themselves for the heavy losses sustained that day.

As the launch dashes into the rising billows she sends the spray dashing over them occasionally, whereupon, the little brass cannon having been safely housed, Chauncey proceeds to make their

position secure by closing the window with which this end of the cabin is provided, in order that the man at the wheel may see which way to steer.

The afternoon sun shows them the island of Zanzibar far away to the east. A tremendous stretch of water lies between.

Chauncey braces up when he sees how calm the soldier of fortune appears.

"I believe you wather like this bobbing up and down like a champagne cork on the watah," he declares, seeking to draw Sir Roderic out, and discover whether he anticipates danger.

The veteran laughs softly.

"It is quite a delightful sensation to me, and if it wasn't that we had a lady aboard, d'ye know I'd be only too glad to have a regular Indian ocean howler break over us. Really, I'm curious to know how this little trick would carry herself under such conditions."

The explorer gasps, and remarks:

"Then you—a—wather enjoy having your life in danger, I imagine."

"Well, it's an old story. Probably long familiarity with danger arouses a contempt in one's heart. I have imbibed some of the notions of these fatalist Mohammedans, and believe that when a man's time

has come he will go anyway. Knew an old sailor who braved death for fifty years on the sea, and escaped every known peril, to drown at last in a bucket of water."

"Gwacious! how odd," dubiously.

"You see, after giving up his ship he settled down on shore. It was his habit every morning to go into his cellar with a bucket of water into which he would dip his head. One day they found him on his knees dead, his head fastened in the bucket. Perhaps some fit came on him while in the act, but at any rate he drowned there."

The launch gives a greater plunge than usual.

"Have you, in your extensive expewience, ever been out at sea in so small a cwaft as this, and with a storm thweatening?" asked the apprehensive skipper, boldly.

"Once, years ago. I had been in the hands of the notorious Riff pirates as a prisoner, and saw more of their life among the Errif and Atlas mountains than possibly any other white man of that time or this.

"It would take too long to tell the story, but I managed to escape in a twenty-foot felucca, and was hotly pursued. Only the coming of a Mediterranean storm prevented my recapture and death, so you see even a tempest is not always an unmixed evil.

"By such superhuman efforts as a desperate man can put forth I managed on the following day to reach the shelter of Gibraltar, and had the pleasure some time later of guiding an English expedition sent out to punish the Riff pirates, known to many as the water-devils of the Morocco coast."

"Ah! let us hope we will be quite as fortunate in gaining a hawbor," eagerly.

"There is no storm in sight, though we shall have plenty of wind and a high sea. The little beauty seems to work like a charm, and unless some accident happens there's no reason why we shouldn't make harbor. At least we are in no position to flunk —its Hobson's choice."

"Ah—you see, I was only thinking of the lady—p'waps she cawn't swim, though we have life pweservers on the boat. How would it do for us all to equip ourselves in time of peace—not that I dweam we shall need the beastly things; but you see—a—when a fellah goes to the twouble to supply such awticles he likes to feel that they are appweciated, don'tcherknow."

"Exactly," returns Sir Roderic, without the trace of a smile, though his humorous gray eyes twinkle; "and I assure you, skipper, it isn't a bad idea at all. Suppose you get out a supply of the corks, and have

them ready in case of an emergency. It will relieve our minds to know we are so well looked after."

Chauncey springs to obey, and in a very brief space of time has not only bountifully supplied every person on board with several cork floaters, but fastens a couple upon his person regardless of the ludicrous appearance his equipment produces.

Then he becomes wonderfully calm, even when the "yacht" commences to plunge her nose into each successive wave, and kick her heels high in the air as she mounts over the top.

Greene soon finds that his duty is by the gas engine, lest some accident occur, for whenever the propeller is out of the water it whirls around at a fearful rate.

Progress is necessarily slow and tedious.

Gordon sits beside his Hildegarde, supporting her muffled form with one arm. They converse in low tones, doubtless in connection with the mysterious past, and the prospect for the near future. Time, no doubt, passes unheeded by them, as it almost universally does when lovers are together.

Occasionally Jack joins the Briton at the wheel, to survey the heaving seas ahead, and speculate as to the progress made.

When an hour has passed Zanzibar has grown more distinct, but it remains an open question, even if all goes well with the launch, whether they can make their intended harbor before the sun sinks behind the distant shore line of the continent.

The prospect of being out upon the rolling sea with a dark night near at hand is something that gives the skipper anything but pleasure.

He proceeds to get his lights in condition, however, and exhibits so much of a philosophical spirit in such action that the veteran's heart quite warms toward him.

"His affectation is all the result of false training—if as a boy he had been turned loose to rub against the world, the chap has it in him to make a decent sort of fellow. I like him—he improves with acquaintance; and, if a clown in his dress and speech, his heart's in the right place every time."

That constitutes Sir Roderic's summing up, and when he thus forms an opinion of a man it holds good.

Lower sinks old Phœbus, and it becomes painfully manifest that they will have to complete the last portion of their voyage in the darkness of night.

The pilot prepares for this, as well as the circum-

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stances will allow, by observing every landmark visible along Zanzibar's coast.

One thing has been gained. Sir Roderic has noted the direction of wind and waves, and so shaped their course that they secure some benefit from the land.

The scene is one of surpassing grandeur as the sun hangs above the horizon preparatory to saying good-night.

Gordon has influenced the girl to witness it, and with considerable laughter on account of the pitching of the little boat, and her appearance, swathed in a traveling rug, they stand near the skipper and watch the final plunge of the day-god behind the distant coast line.

Chauncey, while busy with the engine, finds an excellent opportunity to get a few glimpses of the girl's face.

He has expected to see a pretty girl, but the reality almost takes his breath away, and he can only pucker up his lips and give vent to a low whistle as he once more pays attention to his charge.

And with the disappearance of the sun, the daylight quickly plunges into night, for twilight is unknown on the Zanzibar coast.

The changed conditions are not such as may inspire

confidence, since the human soul is so constituted that new terrors arise with the blackness of night—day is symbolical of life and hope, while despair gnaws at the heart under cover of darkness.

Chauncey has lighted his lanterns, and the red and green bulls' eyes so familiar to all who go down to the sea in ships, hang one on either side, to give warning of their presence.

Much now depends on Sir Roderic, but he stands up to his task like a hero, keeping the boat headed just enough into the waves so that she may not fall into the trough of the sea and be knocked on her beam ends, and all the while watching certain lights which serve to guide him.

All honor to the gallant little craft, and those who fashioned her engine. It works like a charm, and pushes the launch against heavy seas in a miraculous manner, considering what a toy it seems upon the surface of the ocean. And Anglo-Saxon pluck and endurance win the fight, as they have done on many a field far back along the ages past.

CHAPTER

"GOOD-NIGHT, BUT NOT GOOD-BYE!"

Fortune favors them in several ways, since the wind deteriorates in force about sunset, though the waves still roll with majestic power, and the shelter of the land affords them some protection against the sea.

Thus, their conditions continue to improve during the next hour, and Sir Roderic discovers enough to allow him a chance of speaking words of good cheer to the others.

It is about nine o'clock when they enter the calm water of the harbor, after about as exciting an experience as ever fell to the lot of a little company.

Chauncey is dreadfully well pleased with the performance of the cedar boat—he had no idea she could stand such a buffeting, so that her conduct has exceeded his wildest dreams.

Nor does he hesitate to declare himself delighted with the strange adventure by means of which he has

made the acquaintance of two such clever gentlemen, and been entertained with a marine battle.

They slacken their speed.

Lights can be seen around them, some of which doubtless proceed from on board the war vessels anchored in the harbor.

The marines hold the town well in hand, although the ruins of the destroyed buildings still burn, and it has been this light which really served Sir Roderic as a beacon by means of which he has been enabled to guide the little craft to the shelter of the harbor.

They are hailed from the deck of the Swallow, near which they chance to approach, showing that the watch has been cautioned to be on the alert, for Arabs are treacherous folks to handle, and some of those defeated in the battle of the morning would look on it as a glorious recompense if one of the British ironclads could be sunk that night by means of a torpedo or other ingenious device.

Sir Roderic bawls out a reply and sends his compliments to his good friend the brave commander of the gunboat.

Those on the launch have as yet held no consultation regarding their plans when the harbor has been gained. Possibly this has arisen from the fact that

their prospects of reaching land have seemed so precarious at times that they hardly dared figure beyond the present moment.

This must now be settled.

Of course Chauncey intends to remain with his craft, and he hastens to impress it upon the others that if they will do him the honor of becoming his guests until morning, he stands ready to make them just as comfortable as the conditions will allow—there is plenty of food aboard, a little gasolene range upon which supper may be cooked, and surely the craft is large enough to lodge all of them for one night.

Sir Roderic hears and is mightily tempted to accept the invitation without delay, for he would see more of this Yankee skipper who affects the airs of a howling swell, and yet develops astonishing qualities in the hour of danger.

He waits to hear what the others have to say first, for Gordon and Hildegarde have been talking earnestly.

The young girl is evidently deeply worried over her condition, and not knowing her story Sir Roderic can not of course fully realize the gravity of it all. He has a natural curiosity to know the identity of the man who apparently controlled her movements,

how Gordon came to meet her, what strange freak of fortune in connection with his love affairs sent him adrift in the China sea, and how he has followed his Hildegarde to the troubled port of Zanzibar just at the time when Said Khalid struck his bold blow for the sovereignty of the island.

He even remembers that Jack declared this guardian of his sweetheart was hand in glove with the bold usurper, and that he dared not seek shelter as Said Khalid had done, at the German consulate, which fact increases the mystery surrounding him tenfold.

So they float in the harbor, which was that morning the scene of a terrific bombardment, while a girl endeavors to make up her mind.

Sir Roderic is nothing if not a philosopher, and he realizes that when the proper time arrives Jack will take him into his confidence; while enjoying their cigars or pipes, the story will be spun which serves as a foundation for all this later turmoil.

Meanwhile he is content to wait and let events shape themselves as they will.

Secretly he is in hopes the young woman with whom Jack's fortunes seem to be so positively amalgamated will decide to spend the night upon the little launch, as it must certainly be safer for her in

their company than ashore. Zanzibar is hardly a fit place for Europeans under the most favorable conditions, and before the rebellion there were not over sixscore of them within the confines of its walls, out of a population numbering over one hundred thousand souls, the balance being ten thousand Arabs, masters of the island, almost as many Hindoos and East Indians, with three-quarters of the population blacks, mostly slaves.

If this were so when ordinary conditions prevailed how much more real must these dangers be since the roar of British cannon smote upon the hearing of these Arab slave-holders, warning them of the beginning of the end; that England, once awake to the dreadful traffic that has been carried on in human flesh, can take no backward step, but must devote herself to abolishing the atrocious business, until the day shall dawn when slave hunting has received its death-blow on African soil, and the shackles of the last slave have been broken.

Jack apparently gives up the point he has endeavored to argue—whether her logic has convinced him, or he yields because she is a woman he loves, it would not be easy to tell from his manner, since he is by nature and breeding a gentleman, and this heritage never leaves a man, even though he engage in the

daily scuffle for fortune in Lombard or Wall street, or seek adventure by field and flood the world over.

"Can you land us, friend Greene?" he asks of the young skipper.

"Most assuwedly, if you insist upon it, but I had hopes we might induce you to join us in a light wepast—I'm positive we would enjoy it. But let it be as you say, Mr. Gordon, I shall hope to see you latah at all events," replies the ever obliging Chauncey.

"Sure of it, my dear fellow, I am under too heavy a load of gratitude for all you have done to lose sight of you so soon. For my part nothing would please me more than to partake further of your hospitality; but Hildegarde has urgent reasons for entering the town without delay. When we meet again I'm going to tell you all about it."

"Good for you, and Jack—"

"Well?"

"Bend down—I say, old fellah, you won't neglect to ask me when it comes off!"

"Comes off—what the deuce—"

"Ah! now, don't feign ignowance, deah boy—you know what I mean—the wedding to be sure."

"Consider it settled—if you are within a thousand

miles you shall be best man, Mr. Greene. I should esteem it an honor."

"Then defer it until I come out of Afwican wilds, I beg of you."

"There will be no hurry, I reckon, and I would do much for such a *fidus Achates*. Good night, Sir Roderic, but not good-bye. I mean to look you up to-morrow, if alive. I have something to tell you."

"And I something to ask," returns the veteran, gravely, as his eyes again seek the countenance of the young girl, his own features giving evidence of considerable emotion, the cause of which must remain a mystery for a little while.

Hildegarde now approaches.

They have brought up alongside a rough dock, and the launch is made fast.

"I wish to thank you, Sir Roderic, for what you have done. There are not many men who would risk their lives for an unknown girl," is what she says.

He takes her hand gently.

"Oh! I trust you are mistaken about that. Besides, you know, it was quite a rare treat to me, chasing an Arab dhow in this dainty little craft. Fighting in one way or another has been my business all my life. At one time I thought to give it up and

settle down to the enjoyment such as an English squire alone may know, but circumstances over which I had no control again started the rolling stone. I have been only too glad to be of assistance to you, my dear young girl, and if the opportunity comes around again when I may prove of any value, don't hesitate to call on—Roderic Cavendish."

As he distinctly pronounces his name he sees the girl start and look quickly up into his face, though she simply murmurs, "Thank you, kindly."

"Ah!" says Sir Roderic to himself, "she knows!"

He assists them ashore.

Hildegarde's garments have dried upon her, and in this warm climate it is no serious thing to undergo such treatment, particularly with salty sea water.

She is thus able to dispense with the traveling rug, although she can never forget such a friend in time of need.

Chauncey does the honors with as much gallantry as though dressed in a swallow-tail, and upon the ballroom floor, instead of surrounded by the ignorance and bigotry of a Mohammedan slave city.

So Jack and his sweetheart move away in the semi-darkness, the last heard of them being Gordon's cheery:

"Good-night but not good-bye!"

Sir Roderic turns to the skipper.

"I've a favor to ask, Greene."

"Ah—consider it alweady gwanted, by Jove!"

"Let me keep this revolver to-night."

"Take them all, and the guns too—delighted to be able to serve you."

"Only this one—it may come in handy."

"By Jove! you appear about to desert me too. Shall have to eat my fwugal wepast alone! Wetched luck. I hope, my lord, it isn't petticoats that depwives me of *your* company too?"

"The last thing in the world. I fear Jack may get in more trouble—that he has enemies in Zanzibar, and I'm going to follow them at a distance. So, until we meet again, *au revoir*."

CHAPTER XIII

JACK'S GUARDIAN ANGEL.

When the man of war thus suddenly breaks away from the odd little exquisite, and leaves the honorable Chauncey standing close by his pet launch, he can just discern the couple in whom he experiences so deep an interest, thanks to the unusual light hanging over old Zanzibar.

This illumination is the combined result of smouldering fires that occasionally burst out into flames, a large number of guard fires started by the marines on duty, and the electric search currents from the war vessels in the harbor, which cross and recross, with their streaming avenues of powerful light, now and then sweeping around the water front in order to reveal any hostile movement on the part of the secret enemy.

Sir Roderic partially closes the gap between Jack and his sweetheart and himself, and after that is content to hold his own.

It is no vulgar curiosity that urges the Briton to make such a move, but an earnest desire to be of use to this new friend in whom he has taken so decided an interest.

Besides, he confesses it frankly to himself, the face of Hildegarde moves him strangely. He has reason to feel a deep interest in this sweetheart of Jack Gordon, and her strange history—more than ever does he look forward toward the hour when Jack will believe it incumbent upon him to relate all that has happened in the past.

Perhaps Sir Roderic may also have a little story to tell bearing somewhat upon the past of a Hildegarde he once knew.

Recollections long buried are surging up in his mind again, aroused by the sight of a strangely beautiful face.

How quickly time flies—he stands aghast at the realization that twenty years have passed over his head since the day he held a funeral in his heart, and sealed the sepulchre of fond hopes betrayed.

Then, chasing all other fancies out of his brain, he pays strict attention to the business upon which he is bent.

He can see that Jack assists the girl along by placing his arm in hers, not that Hildegarde is weak

or ailing, for she appeared to Sir Roderic quite a healthy young woman, but it is a failing with a man deeply in love, to desire to hold his inamorata as closely to him as possible, nor does she, as a usual thing, object.

The old bachelor smiles grimly as he notes this thing, but he is not a cynical man, like many of his species.

"I like Jack—he impresses me as a brave and honest gentleman. Even without knowing who or what he is beyond being an Englishman, I should believe he would be the man to make a good girl happy. I hope so. What a singular freak of fate if this should be so. Hildegarde—well, that name was once Heaven and all to me. Hello! where have they gone?"

Evidently the couple have turned a corner, and he quickens his pace a little so they may not get out of his range by some legerdemain.

Zanzibar is very quiet on this August night, thanks to the moral effect of the satisfactory drubbing given the audacious rebels in the morning, and the fact that the bold pretender dares not issue forth from the haven he has found in the German consulate.

Thousands of those who would have sided with Said Khalid, had the latter won the first round of

the engagement, are now dead set against his cause, and presently it will be difficult to find an enemy to the new Sultan whom the British mean to place upon the throne.

Nevertheless, on this, the first stretch of darkness after the artillery duel in the harbor, there prowl about the streets of Zanzibar bands of footpads, escaped slaves or desperadoes in the shape of vengeance-seeking Arabs or Hindoos, with whom an honest white man might hardly care to grapple unless sure that his cries for assistance would be heard by a marine patrol in time to save him from the ready steel of merciless, dusky assassins.

Sir Roderic has thought of this, and the possible chances of Jack meeting trouble urges him to follow like a shadow.

Perhaps that insatiable monster, the war spirit within, has not yet been satisfied after the thrilling events of the day—some men never know when they have enough.

Turning the corner, Sir Roderic discovers those whom he serves as a guardian angel, and is relieved to find that as yet they have not been waylaid, although the neighborhood is such that he looks for something of the sort to happen at any moment.

"Who could ever have dreamed," he muses grimly,

as he stalks along, "that I would be given an opportunity to play the same role to her daughter that once upon a time fortune enabled me to act toward her; but then, some men are born in order to serve as doormats upon which gentle women may wipe their dainty feet, and heigho! I presume I belong to that class. So long as I raise no objection, I don't see that it's any one's business; and it is all done in that name I reverence above all else on earth—my mother!"

Which muttered remark may not only stamp the old bachelor as a peculiarly good-hearted fellow in the honest estimation of the average reader, but afford some insight with regard to certain events connected with his past, and why the name of Hildegarde has such a potent power over the cells of his memory.

In truth, Sir Roderic most strongly suspects this girl to be the daughter of one whom he once worshiped, which, if it prove to be true, will add but another straw to show how small this world of ours is after all.

The meditations of the bachelor come to a sudden end, for he hears cries beyond, which would indicate that Jack's progress has been interrupted.

Peace no longer hovers over the scene with her white wings, but has given way to war.

Sir Roderic does not loiter.

To his ears the very initial sound of hostile eruption is an urgent invitation to join in the fracas—really, if his ancestry were traced back a little it might be found to a certainty that there are pugnacious Irishmen along the line, from whom he must have inherited his love for a scrimmage, since it is not a trait found in the ordinary Briton.

He bounds forward like an india rubber ball.

Speedy as is his advance, his arrival does not occur a second too soon, for the young man has been beset by a host of enemies, and is in imminent peril of fashioning a sheath out of his body for one of the numerous flashing steel blades that are in the air.

Even as the soldier swoops down upon the scene with an impetuosity that threatens to sweep all before him, the sharp click of steel smiting against its kind is heard, as Gordon endeavors to hold his own against the foe.

There are half a dozen of the rascals, and in the semi-gloom it is almost impossible to distinguish any individual traits by means of which they might be recognized.

All Sir Roderic cares about is the fact that to his

mind they are a pack of scurvy jackals of the desert, who would down an honest man—a fellow Briton.

Really, it were worth a trip to a far country just to see the tactics of this man who has made battle his mistress, and who has roamed the whole world these many years in the endeavor to study the art of war under every flag, from the yellow dragon of China to the banner of Brazil.

Sir Roderic would have made a good running mate for such heroic figures in the history of the centuries long since gone, as King Richard, the Lion Hearted, or Sir William Wallace, the hero of Scotland's mightiest line of nobles.

His manner is heroic.

Once in the midst of the astonished Arabs he lays about him with right good will, and distributes his favors without the slightest discrimination, so that if one of the rascals receives more than his share of the war-lord's attention it is rather his misfortune than Sir Roderic's fault.

You have seen the well aimed ball roll down the tenpin alley and plunging in among the miniature men scatter the erstwhile solid phalanx in every direction. Then you have a pretty fair idea as to the confusion the sudden advent of this fighting machine creates when he brings up against these dusky

sons of Belial, who are bent upon having a little amusement with a stray Englishman on this night following their humiliation at the hands of the gunboats.

It matters little whether Sir Roderic has a weapon in his hand or not—he seldom requires one when his business is to knock down mutineers or open foes.

There is quite a sociable entanglement for the brief space of about ten seconds, in which the man with the iron muscles averages almost one knock-down argument to the second.

Then the debate is closed.

The affirmative undoubtedly has it all in their hands, since Sir Roderic's opponents melt away like dew in the rays of the morning sun, declining to even linger and hear the summing up.

So much for brawn and muscle, which count for the same amount of respect in these degenerate days as in times of chivalry and knighthood, when men met in the lists to contend for the favor of a ladye fair.

Gordon has been agreeably surprised to find so able an ally; but so great is the confusion while the dark-skinned followers of the Prophet are being bowled over that he can not recognize his friend, the

light being more conspicuous by its feebleness than any other quality.

Doubtless he has a grave suspicion regarding the other's identity, for having once seen Sir Roderic engaged in battle, his many peculiarities must impress themselves so forcibly upon the mind that even in the dark one would recognize his engaging ways by the tremendous power of his assault, his knock-down arguments, and possibly a few favorite exclamations with which he naturally accompanies such efforts.

And so Jack seizes upon his rescuer and wrings his hand with much emotion, for it is pleasant to feel one is being so carefully looked after by such a war-like guardian angel.

CHAPTER XIV

A PAGE FROM A SOLDIER'S PAST

Although Jack's assailants have been so completely routed by the sudden advent of the veteran, and apparently demoralized in the bargain, such a state of affairs is not a sufficient guaranty against their reappearance upon the scene in augmented numbers when they have been given a chance to recover from the confusion.

Sir Roderic knows the vermin right well and has found them pretty much the same the world over, whether met with in the slums of London, Paris, New York, Chicago, St. Petersburg, Constantinople, Hong Kong, Bombay or even this city upon the island of Zanzibar—cowardly save when they can muster overwhelming numbers, revengeful and treacherous.

He therefore urges Gordon not to linger but reach his destination as speedily as possible.

Whereupon Jack begs the veteran to accompany them, and is ably seconded in this request by the young girl.

"Had I known you were coming ashore I should have asked you to go with us before," declares Gordon with a heartiness that fully bears out his words.

Sir Roderic agrees without attempting to argue the matter; but does not think it necessary to state that his sole object in coming ashore and giving up Chauncey's warm proposal of a neat little supper and a fair bed on the launch was a desire to serve these two cooing turtle doves, who might be so eternally wrapped up in each other that danger could approach open-faced without making any impression upon them.

They quicken their steps and have soon left the scene of the little excitement far in the rear.

Nor has their departure been any too speedy, for the quick ears of the soldier catch various signal whistles in certain quarters that tell him all too plainly the clans are gathering—just as a scattered covey of quail will, after a certain lapse of time, begin to whistle and again come together in a bunch.

One thing is particularly good—Jack appears to be familiar with his ground, and it is quite evident the young man must have done considerable tramping

around the quaint city of Zanzibar before he found himself an inmate of the Sultan's dungeon. Which reminds Sir Roderic that he has a story to hear in connection with that selfsame adventure, which must be of more than ordinary interest—of that more anon.

Jack is exceedingly solicitous concerning his companion, as any lover might be, and does not hesitate to lend the assistance of his arm in order that the fair Hildegarde may the more readily keep pace with them.

"Only a little further—we are nearly there, my dear girl. You know there is only one more turn beyond the mosque. There, we have reached the shrine of the marabouts' tomb, and in two minutes will be knocking at the portals of the humble dwelling which at present you call home. I am content to leave you there to-night because he is far away, that friend of the caliph who dares not come back while British guns control Zanzibar. But to-morrow, Hildegarde, some different arrangements shall be made. I have served too faithfully in this long and bitter struggle against fate and Colonel Monks to give him another chance when the victory has been well won. And I do not believe you will refuse one who has been so faithful in his devotion."

A portion of this is spoken in a low, loverlike

tone, but then Sir Roderic's hearing is unusually acute, and he can not avoid catching every word.

He has an especial reason for hearkening to what is said, seeing that as yet he gropes so much in the dark, and seeks enlightenment on various subjects.

Hildegarde whispers her reply, which seems at least fairly satisfactory to Jack, for he immediately remarks:

"It is a pleasure beyond words to do anything for such a dear girl. I told you once I was willing to wait and labor seven years, if necessary, as Jacob did for his wife. But you promise to listen to my plans in the morning, for since Monks has had to give up his guardianship through stress of war you must have a protector."

"She shall decide," says Hildegarde.

"Very good—I am content."

Sir Roderic experiences a peculiar thrill at the mention of another person, who appears to have some authority over the young girl now that the mysterious Colonel Monks is gone.

She! What may not that word mean to him—will a strange fortune raise the veil that has hung between him and his one love episode of the dim past, and bring him face to face with *his* lost Hildegarde?

Ah! Jack no longer strides along the narrow and

crooked street, but has come to a sudden halt just a short distance beyond the mosque in which the Mohammedans worship.

He even enters an arched doorway with an assurance that possibly results from long vigils before this same modest building, previous to his incarceration in that noisome dungeon under the palace that is now no more, thanks to the guns of the fleet.

Upon this door is a knocker, and Jack beats a lively tattoo on it that can not fail to be heard by those within.

He is about to repeat the summons, fancying he hears loud voices along the crooked way, that would indicate the approach of enemies, when the door is opened by a half grown boy as black as the ace of spades, who gives an exclamation of astonishment and delight at sight of Hildegarde whom he believes to be far away with Colonal Monks.

She addresses him as Egypt, and with a courtesy that stamps her a lady, invites her two gentlemen friends to enter.

Sir Roderic holds back a trifle, being in doubt whether it is right for him to enter—he is both tempted and deterred by memories of that wretched episode in his past; but Jack will not hear of his beating a retreat.

"You said you would stand by me, and I may have need of your good arm before morning, especially if that indefatigable schemer finds a chance to return to Zanzibar, which is possible—anything is possible with him, I believe. Besides, I have a few matters to clear up, and if you will not be bored we might pass the time very comfortably."

And Jack's specious argument sweeps Sir Roderic's feeble objections quite out of sight. He has wanted to be persuaded, and yields as gracefully as possible.

"Oh! if I can be of any further service to you my dear boy, or to the young lady, I shall hold myself ready to assist up to my limit. I would not intrude, that is all."

"Sir, do not speak of intruding after all you have done for me since noon. I can never frame in words the gratitude that fills my heart. You are indeed welcome, and Egypt shall make you as comfortable as our poor dwelling will admit. I am sure you will forgive the lack of such things as are impossible to secure in this heathen land."

The soldier of course begs her not to mention it—that as an old campaigner he has been so accustomed to enduring hardships that what she might deem a poor entertainment would appear luxurious to a soldier of fortune habituated to the inclemency of the

weather, to sleeping on the ground with but the sky for a covering unless snow made a blanket, and who has even once subsisted upon soup made of old boot-tops when with an Arctic exploring party.

So they enter.

The building is after the usual pattern of Mohammedan dwellings, perhaps a trifle more pretentious than the majority in Zanzibar.

When they pass into an apartment, the tinkling sound of a gurgling fountain floats in through an open window, while an odor of tropical blossoms hangs in the air, the combination producing a sensation of delight, even the stern man of war being susceptible to it.

Hildegarde, having given some orders to the black boy, leaves the two gentlemen.

Jack has already stretched his six feet out upon a divan and beseeches his friend to do likewise.

"Aha! this is what I call solid comfort, after being cooped up in that little launch so many hours," he says.

"Don't run it down—the boat served our purpose like a little witch, and besides, she rode those seas in great style" laughs the other, also finding a seat, and keeping one nervous eye upon the hanging cur-

tains through which the girl passed when quitting the room.

"Not I—never will I cease to remember that jaunty craft and her remarkable skipper with the most intense gratitude. All the same this is comfortable. And Egypt will presently be bringing us something to eat and drink, together with the colonel's best brand of cigars. I think we have small cause for complaint, milord."

"Verily, our lines have fallen in pleasant places. I am not so hungry, but should those cigars turn out fairly well they will touch my heart, and I can even forgive Colonel Monks the stern chase he led us to-day. By the way Gordon," assuming a careless manner to cover his eagerness, "did I understand you to say this *bon homme* fugitive, who has been hand in glove with the Sultan just deposed by British guns, is the young lady's father?"

He endures tortures during the few seconds that elapse ere Jack replies.

"Oh! no, her guardian—a sort of uncle, I believe, being a stepbrother to her mother."

The soldier breathes a little more freely.

"Then—she has—a mother?"

"Yes, in this same house."

"H'm! have you ever seen her?"

"Many times."

"Does the daughter resemble her at all?"

"Very much," looking a little curiously at his companion, as though beginning to wonder why Sir Roderic has conceived a sudden interest in the opposite sex.

But the soldier does not betray himself.

"I only ask because I fancied I might have once known her mother. You have not told me her name, Gordon."

"Pardon—how stupid—it is Cameron."

The soldier flinches a little but he is dead game and only his teeth grate together as under his breath he mutters:

"So she married *him* after I left him for dead on the field where we fought our duel."

CHAPTER XV

A FIGHT FOR A SWEETHEART

Even as yet Sir Roderic does not see fit to take Jack Gordon into his confidence with regard to what Hildegarde's mother might have been toward him in the days of "auld lang syne."

It is a delicate matter, and he flinches from such a tearing open of old wounds, in a way no one ever saw him exhibit when leading his men into the jaws of death with a forlorn hope entrusted to his management; cannon to the front of him, cannon on every side, belching forth smoke and flame and a torrent of iron hail.

Jack, of course, does not suspect anything—his mind is too much engrossed with his own affairs at present to wrestle with matters that do not intimately concern him.

Then comes Egypt bearing a tray filled with a hastily concocted supper, his black face shining

with delight at the privilege of waiting upon people of quality again, for of late the visitors at Colonel Monks' house in Zanzibar have been Arabs concerned in the desperate scheme to get Sultan Hamed Bin Thwin out of the way and give the audacious Said Khalid a chance to seize the reins of government; and Egypt despised himself for having to serve those who were not far removed from his own color.

When the repast has been finished, Jack dismisses the above servitor, after which the two pilgrims apply themselves to the task of determining the judgment of the absent Colonel Monks, late of Her Majesty's Hussars, as evidenced in his selection of cheroot.

Both are of the opinion that while the brand might leave much to be desired in the mind of a connoisseur, did he have the opportunity of making other selections, in this far off corner of the universe they would be set down as of an altogether superior grade.

It matters considerably, when passing upon such an article, where and under what conditions it is smoked.

Having settled this knotty problem to their individual and combined satisfaction, the two roamers

make themselves as comfortable as the conditions allow.

Being within reaching distance of each other they are able, while snugly ensconced, to chat in low tones and with hardly an exertion.

The time has come for a hearing—Sir Roderic feels in a humor to listen, and besides, he has the usual amount of curiosity given to his sex. Jack is no word wizard—he lacks the flow of language that goes to make up a yarn-spinner such as the pasha to whom we are indebted for tales like those ever-fascinating Arabian Nights' Entertainment.

He comments upon certain facts as he meets with them in the course of his narrative, and Sir Roderic, whose interest being once aroused never flags, asks numerous questions.

Stripped of all verbiage, Gordon's story might be supposed to run in something of this groove, condensed and abridged:

He had first met Hildegarde a year back, and of course fell in love at first sight. It was in the English-Chinese city of Hong Kong. She was living there with her mother and this uncle guardian who seemed to exercise some sort of strange hypnotic power over them, such as Du Maurier has made

famous in his description of that eccentric genius Svengali in Trilby.

Jack, by a rare good streak of luck, was given an opportunity to do the young girl quite a favor—he called it a small thing, but she chose to believe he had saved her life. Whatever it was, whether saving her from a runaway accident, rescuing her from a burning pagoda, appearing just in time to frighten off some yellow-skinned Mongolians bent upon plunder or ransom, or jumping into the water after her when an accident befel her boat in the harbor, Gordon refuses to confess; but at any rate she overestimated the service, and of course they fell in love with each other.

Then trouble came, as usual.

Colonel Monks showed his hand, and to all appearance he held a flush royal. He exorcised Hildegarde and her mother with his power, and gave Jack to understand that his space was much preferable to his company.

Now here was a nice kettle of fish, and it might have deterred many young men from proceeding further in the game of hearts.

Not so Jack.

He chanced to be one of those Britons possessed of

a wonderful backbone and as stubborn in his way as —well, it must be said, a mule.

Besides, he had read in Hildegarde's eyes that she loved him, before this cruel edict of the heartless guardian separated them, and once assured of this fact, all the uncles in Hong Kong or England or the universe, could not cause him to haul off so long as Heaven granted him power to remain.

Then began a strange series of plots and counter-plots. Jack learned that Colonel Monks was playing some deep and desperate game, and that he seemed to possess a mysterious control over the young girl and her mother—while he was present, Hildegarde hardly seemed to have a mind of her own, and even told Jack he had better go about his business.

Though not easily abashed, this rather staggered the bold wooer, and he even contemplated a speedy departure from the Flowery Kingdom; but his old suspicions cropping out he determined to effect a secret interview with the girl. This he managed to bring about, and lo, she confessed that she loved him.

The coming of Monks unexpectedly upon the scene, when Jack was helping the girl down a ladder, rather complicated matters, especially as the doughty colonel had a couple of stout Chinese servants at hand.

Jack was game, and gave them a good tussle for their money, but he was hardly a match for three of them.

The result was rather disastrous, as the bold wooer found himself bundled neck and crop over the fence, in a dazed condition, rather the worse for wear, while Hildegarde was taken back to her room.

As the wind fans the flames and produces a stronger fire simply through irritation, so Jack's determination to win the girl he loved was strengthened by such obstacles as Monks could throw in the way.

The girl was not of age, and besides, such was the influence of Monks over her mother that it would hardly profit Jack to bring the case up in an English court, lest Hildegarde, acting under the controlling power of the hypnotist, denounce her lover openly.

So Gordon found himself reduced to secret methods. Three separate attempts did he make to carry the girl off.

Fate treated him very shabbily, for just when success seemed assured on the last occasion, an accident threw the whole scheme to the ground, allowing the colonel another victory.

Then it was Monks' turn.

The persistency of this stubborn lover gave him

constant anxiety, for he had some tremendous plans of his own by means of which he hoped to make a couple of hundred thousand pounds after Hildegarde came into her little fortune upon reaching age.

Jack never knew the particulars of this grand piece of rascality, but understood that it had to do with Monks' singular power over the minds of mother and daughter, and that some wealthy old foreigner was concerned in it, his worn out heart having been fascinated by Hildegarde's transcendent beauty.

When Monks showed his hand young Gordon found what a merciless enemy he had made.

In Hong Kong, even with British military rules in force, desperadoes flourish like the green bay tree, and it was the easiest thing in the world for the colonel to hire men for the purpose he had in view. So one night Jack was led astray by a note delivered by a coolie, and which purported to come from his own dear Hildegarde, appointing a rendezvous where they might meet, and, seeking the assistance of a clergyman Jack had already engaged for the purpose, be made one before her cruel guardian could interfere.

Gordon was dreadfully unsuspicious. He had something to learn with the tricks of mankind.

Of course he was at the appointed spot to the very second, and with what rapture he beheld a muffled female form approach words would be inadequate to declare.

Behold! what a shock—just as the ardent lover would have clasped the veiled and cloaked figure in his arms, his heart beating with rapture beyond compare, the supposed nymph suddenly threw back the veil.

Horrors! he beheld the ugly features of a piratical Mongolian, who grinned at his discomfiture, and then without a second's warning threw himself upon the Briton.

Jack was taken by surprise and at a disadvantage. The garments which constituted the other's disguise fluttered around him, and actually prevented his putting forth his best efforts, so that after a very brief struggle he found himself on his back.

A whistle brought several others, and they must have taken away his senses with some hideous Chinese drug, for Jack knew nothing more until he opened his eyes and found himself on board a junk far out upon the China sea.

At a time that suited the convenience of his foes he was coolly and deliberately tossed overboard. It would seem as though nothing could save the adven-

turous young Briton now; but his time had not yet come.

A floating hen-coop drifted within reach of his hands, and upon this he rested, concealed from the sight of his enemies by the gathering shades of darkness, for a whole day had passed while he was sailing into the eastern sea on board the junk.

Words can never do justice to the sufferings Jack endured, tortured by heat, racked by the pangs of thirst, and horrified by an occasional glimpse of a shark's fin rising out of the water some distance away.

But at last, when almost ready to despair, he was picked up by the steamer on which Sir Roderic chanced to be a passenger, and taken to Hong Kong, where for some weeks he battled with the grim monster, Death on a white horse.

The attendants in the hospital were assiduous, and it was really to their care as well as his own splendid constitution that Gordon owed his life.

When able to get around again, as might be expected, his first duty was to think of opening communications with his sweetheart.

Alas! bitter disappointment awaited him. They had left Hong Kong the very day he was set adrift upon the ocean—yes, if his calculations were cor-

rect, the steamer he saw on the morning after he had buffeted the waves twelve hours, was the very one which bore Hildegarde away, and for all he knew she might have been on deck watching the sun rise and looking far over the green waters at the time he so eagerly scanned the vessel in order to discover what chance there was of a change in her course, so that he might be seen.

Jack employed assistance, and learned that those he sought had headed for Singapore.

Thither he went.

Arriving he found they had again gone. The great scheme with the Count had fallen through on account of the old roue turning up his toes, which fact threw Colonel Monks upon other resources, in which he was never lacking.

He had another game in view, which really eclipsed the first, though of a different character.

In his wanderings he had made the acquaintance of an adventurer, whose equal for daring it would be hard to find in all Arabia.

This was no other than Said Khalid, the man who aspired to reign in Zanzibar, but against whom the influence of British protectorate had always been thrown.

In some manner these two had become fast friends,

and receiving word as to what was in the wind Monks had made his way to Zanzibar so as to be in readiness when the hour for an uprising came.

Possibly he could enlighten the world as to the true facts with relation to the sudden taking off of the former Sultan, who was undoubtedly poisoned.

Colonel Monks was to become the commander-in-chief of Said Khalid's army in case of success; and no doubt the stubborn resistance offered by the Zanzibaris and Askaris was partly due to his generalship.

When Jack, after several fruitless enterprises, finally learned where they had gone, he seized the first chance that presented itself to sail for the island upon the east African coast.

Finding it impossible to get a steamer, he at length took passage on a sailing vessel and arrived at his destination in good order, just a short time previous to the crash of the thunderbolt.

Indeed, the Sultan was dead when he reached Zanzibar, and already Said Khalid had proclaimed himself sole ruler, expecting to gain the support of all true Mohammedans, who hate the English on general principles.

The fleet in the harbor was not yet sufficiently strong to coerce the rebel chief, so that the shrewd

commander played a waiting game, knowing that assistance was coming as fast as steam could bring the mail-clad ships of war.

Jack was burning with eagerness to find his beloved Hildegarde and learn that all was well, so he lost no time in commencing the search. Here the jade, Fortune, gave him another disastrous slap in the face.

His presence in Zanzibar became known to Said Khalid's prime minister, Colonel Monks, and as that personage was invested with autocratic powers during the brief interval between the assumption of power on the part of his chief and the bombardment, the result was really a foregone conclusion.

Gordon had been able to discover the house where the ladies lodged, and haunted the vicinity, waiting for an opportunity to communicate with his charmer, when Monks discovered his presence.

Though no doubt amazed to learn that the sea had given up its prey, the colonel was too energetic an individual to allow such a small thing to disturb him.

He put a few of his pet native soldiers upon Jack's trail, and as a result the young man made the acquaintance of a dungeon under the palace of the sultan.

It was no doubt the fell design of Monks to make way with him at his leisure; but the demands of the hour occupied his attention up to the time when that storm broke over the port. Jack heard the roar of battle, and suffered agonies in the thought that Hildegarde might be exposed to this bombardment, or that should Monks flee he would carry her away again.

He could hear the explosion of shells, from the gunboats, in the palace overhead, and the sounds thrilled him with patriotic fervor.

How that love for country will crop out at all times and under every circumstance—the sight of a flag brings tears to the eyes, while the sound of a voice uttering words in the language of home, has appeared to many ears the sweetest on earth.

So Jack worked away at a little tunnel he had started, and listened to the sound of crashing walls. He knew how the tide of battle must be going, and was not surprised when the guns gradually ceased to reply.

Then came almost silence, and he understood the palace must be a ruin and on fire.

His fate was an uncertain quantity, but this did not give Gordon half the anxiety as filled his mind on account of Hildegarde.

Then came Sir Roderic and blessed liberty. The rest we know.

Such, in brief, is the story Jack spins as he lies there on Colonel Monks' easy divan among the tufted pillows, and smokes that astute individual's best weeds with a nonchalance that is positively charming, while the soldier of fortune asks questions and congratulates him on the success that has finally rewarded his long fight for a sweetheart.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ARMISTICE

Even Sir Roderic, who has seen so much of adventure in his checkered career, is bound to confess that young Gordon's experience has been a remarkable one.

What Jack still fears is the secret influence of the colonel, or possibly the return of that worthy, who has made many friends in Zanzibar during his brief spell of authority.

That is why he enjoys the presence of Sir Roderic while standing guard.

The soldier on his part has managed to ask not a few questions bearing upon the matter, but so framed that the answers give him a certain amount of information concerning the one in whom his interest is centered.

All the while he has kept one eye upon the *portieres* which conceal the exit to the apartment in

this home Colonel Monks has fitted up with oriental luxuriance in Zanzibar's capital, no doubt anticipating future power as the new ruler's military adviser.

Time has passed, and Hildegarde still fails to come. Even Jack is growing anxious, and sounds the bell for Egypt.

When that son of Ham appears, smiling and obsequious as usual, he is sent with a message to the effect that the gentlemen have dined, and would be glad to have a talk with the ladies on the subject of their future plans, provided it is not too late.

While the black boy is gone, Sir Roderic, unable to remain seated longer, paces to and fro like a caged tiger, pretending to examine the furnishing of the room, but in reality waiting nervously to look upon the face of the woman whom he has not seen since the day he fought a duel with his rival, the father of Hildegarde, and left him apparently dying on the field.

How the dead past rises before his mental vision now, conjured up by memory's fingers playing upon the strings.

As if it were yesterday this bachelor warrior can see the woman he loved, in all her beauty—yes, he has deceived himself all these years in believing that

passion buried, when in fact it only slumbered, and now gives unmistakable evidence of an awakening.

Sir Roderic learned later on that his rival had recovered from his apparently fatal wound, but was never able to hear what became of the girl, which accounts for his surprise and embarrassment upon discovering that after all the man whom he hated, who had been a false friend and treacherously undermined him in the regard of the girl he loved, had won the stakes.

And now Cameron was dead, and his widow was about to once more cross the path of her former lover—it was one of those strange freaks of fate that overwhelm man occasionally.

A step—the rustle of garments—the curtains tremble at a touch, and then Hildegarde appears, Jack's Hildegarde.

She looks as lovely as a dream, and even the rather cynical old bachelor is bound to admit that such a gloriously beautiful girl could not fail to arouse the deepest admiration in the heart of British gentleman, Russian baron, or Zanzibar sultan.

He even grants Jack absolution—the last doubt as to the young man's sanity gives way, and Sir Roderic is ready to commend him as a connoissieur of female charms.

Hildegarde advances—Jack is spellbound by the sight of so much loveliness, which the poor fellow can scarce believe he has really won; but recovering his senses, springs eagerly to meet her, at which she holds up her hand with an appealing gesture.

"Spare my frock, sir—there, you can kiss my hand if you like. I hope you have been enjoying yourselves, gentlemen. Two hours you have spent here in dining and talking. No doubt you had much to say," she speaks with the composure of a well-bred girl, such as one is bound to admire for her diplomacy.

"Yes," declares Jack, "I was boring my good friend with a yarn, detailing the many attempts I have made to kidnap you from Colonel Monks' keeping. Taken in all, told by a master in the art, such as Stephenson or Clark Russell, I rather guess the story would contain much of interest; but I am a wretched narrator, and must have butchered the yarn frightfully."

"I protest against that—you did very well, indeed, better than I could have told it. There is an affair I had an interest in connected with the Chitral campaign, that I would give much to see between the covers of a book, for I believe it contains the elements of a marvelous story to which

Haggard alone could do justice; but although I saw many of the incidents myself, and knew the characters well, I lack the talent to string such facts into a connected narrative. I'm a soldier always, and such men are not by nature fitted to be artisans of the pen."

"I, too, have been listening to a story," says the young girl, looking directly at Cavendish, who turns singularly white, as though hard hit.

"Ah! an Arabian Night fable I suppose, as this atmosphere is conducive to such stretches of the imagination," suggests Jack, whose beaming face and lovelit eyes suggest an example that might well stand as the epitome of a happy lover.

"Not at all, sir. What I heard was the outline of a sad story connected with the past. I learned what must always give me pain, for, at least, I respected my father, if he was a man to whom I was never drawn by filial love. Sir Roderic, do not believe I blame you for what happened. I can see only with my mother's eyes."

His face lights up, and then, as though the iron will of the soldier once more gains the upper hand, this gives place to the former sombre expression.

"And how does she look at the past, if I am not too bold in asking?"

"Long ago she learned the truth—he told her all in a fit of pique, and she could never again look on him as in the past. He confessed that he had won her by fraud, and actually gloried in describing how you were deceived by a false letter. I can not understand how Heaven ever saved his life, Sir Roderic, after you left him for dead that day when you met in the little wood near Seville in Spain."

Jack is listening to this with the most intense surprise. He can not just grasp its true inwardness, but it appears that Sir Roderic once knew the mother of his Hildegarde and loved her—that he even fought a duel about her, and left his opponent for dead.

Really, this is a remakable happening, but after all it seems like a piece of good luck, since Sir Roderic's interest in the ladies has been increased.

"You must excuse mamma for not coming down to-night—she has one of her wretched headaches, and the startling news I brought back with me rather increased it. Later on she will gladly meet you, Sir Roderic—and as for you, Jack, she sends her love and trusts we have overcome the last of our trials."

Whatever Jack may think he does not wish to alarm Hildegarde.

That he and Sir Roderic will pass the night under the roof that shelters the ladies, he has explained in a natural way, since the city is in a very perturbed state, and there may at any time be rioting, when a couple of protectors might prove very useful.

He does not even mention Monks, and yet it is of that arch schemer he thinks most.

They talk in a general way for a time.

Hildegarde is herself now that the magnetic man who possesses such an eerie influence over her actions is away. She seems unusually full of spirits, and even sings for them, accompanying herself with the sweet notes of a mandolin.

Jack is the happiest man in all Zanzibar for the time being. He believes he has won a prize in the great lottery, forgetting that he has to deal with a man who never learned the meaning of the word "fail." Monks is one of those enterprising individuals who, baffled on one tack proceeds to adopt other methods. Monks will be heard from again before the campaign is closed, depend on that. He has a grand new scheme on foot in which he has interested a new companion, an opulent Italian nobleman with palaces and castles in abundance—Hildegarde knows something about it, but she awaits a more fitting opportunity of telling her lover, since she herself

represents the merchandise Monks means to put up against one of the Venetian palaces—it is a wife for a castle, a fair exchange according to Monks.

When at length the two gentlemen are left alone, it is nearly midnight. Jack has been given due authority by the girl of his heart to carry out any design he may consider advisable, with the idea of adding to their protection. So, accompanied by the soldier bearing a lamp, he makes the rounds of the queer apartments, looking to any doors and windows that face upon the street, though these are mere slits in the wall, through which only a skeleton figure might come. Even the miniature court with its fountain and flowers is examined.

All seems well, and Sir Roderic can suggest nothing more that might be done. It is quite a picnic with him, and perhaps he cherishes a vague hope that an opportunity may arise to defend the ladies—that olden spirit of chivalry still flickers up into life now and then among a certain class of men who in many ways are hardly of this prosaic, money-worshiping century.

At last the grand rounds have been made and the two defenders of the modest Zanzibar dwelling prepare to snatch forty winks of sleep.

CHAPTER XVII

MET AT THE FOUNTAIN

The veteran has drilled himself to such a point that when he so wills he is able to sleep a given time under the most remarkable conditions.

Jack is altogether a different bird, and although that Turkish divan is as soft a couch as ever man reclined upon to woo the gentle goddess, he woos in vain. From side to side he turns with fancies trooping through his brain. In vain he trys every device by means of which sleep may be induced. Time passes, and he remains as wide awake as a nighthawk or an owl. At another time the musical rhythm of the fountain would lull him to slumber but now it seems to only irritate and remind him that he is thirsty. Being somewhat of a philosopher Jack finally determines that since sleep refuses to respond, woo he ever so ardently, he might as well continue in his well started

campaign of demolishing all of the colonel's cheroots in sight.

Accordingly he pulls himself together and lights one, after which he sits there pondering over the strange freaks of fortune that have followed him during the ten months, since he first met Hildegarde, in fact. It is a grim sort of a retrospect taken in all, with enough adventure scattered through the whole to make a very filling novel; but Jack lingers longest of all upon the closing scenes of the little drama, when he snatched his own from the maw of the hungry sea and leaping from the sinking dhow sustained Hildegarde by the power of his arms until they were rescued by the crew of the cedar launch.

He feels that he has really earned his final triumph—earned it as honorably as ever plumed knight in joust or tournament won victory with lance or sword; and such a conviction is apt to bring a certain amount of satisfaction in its train though Jack does not, of course, puff out with importance.

Again comes that dreadful thirst aggravated by the colonel's cheroots. Jack eyes the burning end of the one he smokes, in suspicion, wondering whether they can have been doctored with any subtle drug by that sly schemer Colonel Monks in anticipation of their use by the enemy.

Finally he determines that nothing serious can be the matter beyond the wretched quality of the tobacco of which the cigar is made.

So he makes his way in the direction of the running water, and standing beside the basin quenches his thirst. What pleasure to have his hands in the cooling liquid. How often has *she* stood here with tender thoughts of the lover she hardly expected to see again thronging her mind. Ah! Heaven has been kind. Jack feels at peace with all the world in this hour of exaltation.

The spirit of his dream changes, just as night succeeds day, or the black clouds of a thunder storm displace the azure hue of the invisible heavens. Zanzibar has not been wholly quiet on this night after the stirring scenes enacted in her harbor, and which must go down in the history of British colonization as a signal triumph.

Sometimes it is a shot that sounds and anon loud shouts—again the noise of a skirmish comes to the ear, as marines or blue-jackets patrolling some especial beat are set upon by a squad of vindictive followers of the beaten self-constituted caliph, and have to use their weapons in order to repel boarders.

So the night has worn on, and when dawn breaks over the sea it will bring relief to thousands of anx-

ious hearts, since with the dark shadows disappear the vague phantoms that seem to threaten dire calamities.

As Jack stands there by the fountain, still lost in meditation, having some time since tossed the stump of his exhausted cigar away he suddenly pricks up his ears and listens.

Unless his hearing deceived him most wofully, he heard a plain, unmistakable sneeze. It was of the masculine order, too, and evidently intended to be muffled.

Jack is interested. He has a right to be.

Besides the black chap, Egypt, there is supposed to be no biped of the male persuasion under this roof.

Could the sneeze have been wafted in from the street—bah! his hearing is too good to allow of such a blunder, and the mere fact of an attempt being made to crush it in its incipiency is enough to arouse his curiosity.

He moves not, but remains like a statue listening eagerly, wondering whether it can be possible some new feature in the series of adventures that are falling to his share is about to occur.

The gurgle of the fountain annoys him now, since it may prevent him from hearing other sounds of deeper importance—sounds that might disclose to him

the quarter where this unknown party may be found, and even his identity.

What was that—a crackling noise as of a match being drawn over a rough surface—it is a match, for a light suddenly springs into existence just in front of Jack.

That young man is of course rather taken aback and yet singularly enough he lets his first thoughts flash to Sir Roderic, who possibly has been having as equally a wretched time wrestling with the enemies of Morpheus as himself and has wandered out to the fountain to cool a fevered tongue.

Of course it is Sir Roderic, and he is about to burn another of the colonel's precious cheroots—see, he has his hands about the tiny blaze of the vesta, in order to protect it from an imaginary breeze, after the habit of all old smokers. Now he raises it to the end of the weed—he gives a puff or two, at the same time removing the shelter of his hands.

With each separate puff the cigar and the vesta blaze up together in the fires of conjugal affection.

The face of the smoker is plainly revealed, and behold, Jack, who has even opened his lips to sing out a salutation as witty as the occasion seems to warrant, Jack, who has stood there without moving hand or foot, looks upon the face of a stranger.

A few more puffs in quick succession.

Then away goes the burning match, and all that remains is the red glowing end of a cigar, together with a most villainous odor even worse than that which the colonel's "Perfectos" emit when on the altar.

Who is this individual?

Jack does not remember ever having seen him before, and yet to judge from his free and easy manner it might be presumed that he feels quite at home under the rooftree of Colonel Monks.

Some boon companion no doubt.

Jack is not a physiognomist, but even a casual observer might discover an Italian cast to the olive-tinted countenance, which is not unhandsome, though inclined to be sneering.

Italy has for some time past been engaged in the mad effort to colonize a section of the east coast of Africa at the southern extremity of the Red sea, with Massowah as her outlet.

The only good portion of the country happens to belong to Abyssinia and these mountain tribes have objected strenuously to the yoke which the subjects of King Humbert would place upon their necks.

As a consequence, fierce battles have been fought, at one of which, Adowa, the Italians met with a terri-

ble repulse, which so humiliated them that they seem to be preparing to quit the whole country. Some of their countrymen drift further south and it would not be strange to find such a man in Zanzibar.

Jack decides he is an Italian on sight—later on he learns that this individual is *the* Italian so far as his interest in the nation is concerned.

The question that affords him cause for wonder is connected with the manner in which this olive-faced foreigner has gained the court.

Could he have been under the roof of the Monks domicile all the while?

Possibly so.

A number of those who were in sympathy with the defeated Sultan have doubtless concealed themselves in various portions of the city, desiring to remain in hiding until they learn how severe the measures Admiral Rawson inaugurates may turn out.

At least Hildegarde was ignorant of his presence.

There is another theory.

The party may be familiar with the house and acquainted with some secret mode of gaining the interior.

Perhaps Monks has returned to Zanzibar, and is somewhere close at hand, though Jack rather fancies some inward monitor must have admonished him

of this fact, if it were so, after the manner of the witches in Macbeth:

> "By the twitching of my thumbs,
> Something evil this way comes."

His interest in this distinguished foreigner grows apace. The party puffs away calmly at his cheroot, as though he might have the "open sesame" to any dwelling in sleeping Zanzibar.

Jack's indignation begins to rise, his fingers to itch with an eagerness to lay hold of the unknown, and demand a satisfactory statement on pain of immediate and forcible ejection. Indeed, he is almost in the act of making a forward move, when something occurs to change his mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENTER—THE COUNT

It is the sound of voices close at hand that disturbs Jack's half formed plan—voices that undoubtedly proceed from some point under the roof of the same house that shelters himself.

His attention being thus directed toward the region from which they proceed, he immediately discovers a light, which moves with a regular swing, thus proclaiming its origin to be a lantern held in a man's hand.

Gordon finds his interest leaving the zero mark and going up with great jumps toward blood heat.

He even sinks his body behind the basin that surrounds the fountain, and allows his hand to grope for the revolver that nestles snugly in his pocket, a gift from Chauncey in memory of the little adventure that befel them on board the naphtha launch.

Of course he does not anticipate having to use the

weapon, but under such conditions as now confront him, it engenders a feeling of additional security to know such an emergency can be met.

Closer comes the light.

Peering out cautiously, from behind his impromptu stockade, Jack beholds the arrival of the man who swings it.

He has guessed the truth—at a glance he recognizes the owner of the premises, the mysterious Colonel Monks, whose knowledge of artillery tactics was so useful to Said Khalid that the pretender made him his chief general.

The British would give something to lay hands on the party to whom they were chiefly indebted for such a ferocious and systematic answer to their cannonade.

It must indeed be a tremendous issue that brings Monks back into the lion's den after once conducting a successful voyage to the mainland where safety awaited him.

Jack can guess the reason.

Hildegarde!

The young girl has been the keystone in all the grand arches this daring schemer had built for some years back. Without her presence he is well nigh helpless. Therefore, he has returned, braving the

dangers that awaited the false sultan's right hand man, now that Zanzibar is in the hands of the British.

At least his daring merits recognition, even though one might scorn his miserable scheme for a fortune, which induces him to take such risks in order to win success.

As he draws near, the smoker at the fountain utters a salutation, and Jack knows as soon as he hears the olive-faced individual's broken English that his guess as to his nationality has been a centre shot.

"I haf arrive before you, my colonel, you see, thanks to your instructions quite, and here I you welcome to your palace with pleasure."

"Yes, I guessed you were here, count—that beastly tobacco is a good *avant courier.* But our time is limited. We have about two hours more of darkness. During that period we must get the women folks aboard your yacht and away from the harbor. There can be no telling what might not happen if we lingered until daylight. Perhaps Rawson might insist on searching your boat before allowing her to steam away."

The excitable son of Italy gives vent to a spluttering exclamation of wrath.

"*Per Bacco!* do you dream he would that dare?"

"Dare," echoes Monks, with a husky laugh, "you don't know Rawson—I do. He was never known to flinch at anything—witness the bombardment of this place even while the German consul gave positive evidence of his displeasure. Don't bank on the admiral funking anything when he sees his duty clear. We must take no chances, but clear out while darkness lasts. Have the repairs been completed?"

"Si, signor colonel—everything is done."

"And steam is up?"

"When we aboard step, that minute shall we begin the journey quite."

"Count, you are a hustler."

"Excuse me, I do not comprehend."

"That is a word I picked up in America, and it covers the case as no other can. It means that you have grasped the situation and hold it in your hand—that you have been quick to utilize every opportunity."

"It runs the blood in—we Rubinis never lay our arms down."

The unseen listener makes a note of this fact, and determines to profit by it should the fortune of war ever bring him face to face with this Italian boaster.

Already he has learned enough of their plans to

know how timely the presence of himself and Sir Roderic is apt to prove.

It must have been an inspiration that induced them to remain on guard when no visible danger threatened.

He takes great pains not to show himself, but listens the while with exceeding gusto.

"You remember our compact, count. We shall make for Venice at once. If all goes well, we are due there a little while before the girl comes of age. She must not marry before on pain of losing her fortune—pardon, *my* fortune that is to be, after the nuptial knot has been tied. We shall be your guests in the famous Rubini palace a few days, until her release comes, when she shall be made a countess forthwith."

"But—when the law releases her quite your authority from she may you defy, she may even laugh us to scorn quite."

"Bah! you forget the power I exercise over the child's mind. When in my presence I am her master. Think, signor, she once even denounced that scamp with whom she is in love, and to his face, calling him a fortune hunter and ordering him away. That was *my* mind speaking through her lips."

"It ees wonderful—but you tell me this miserable

fellow, your compatriot, would not keep away—that he more trouble gave you."

"Trouble—curse his impudence, he has been a thorn in my flesh from the start. I could see Jack Gordon dropped into a kettle of melted lead and sing hosannas. It was him I put in the dungeon under the palace, and yet he was on the launch that overtook us near the coast, sunk several of our boats, played the devil generally and carried Hildegarde back here, necessitating my running the risk of getting my neck stretched by returning to Zanzibar. Don't let's speak of *him*—I tell you I'm in a humor to do murder every time I think of what trouble that scoundrel has brought to me."

All of which is no doubt highly edifying to the said individual who crouches behind the basin of the fountain not ten feet away.

It has one effect on Jack. He draws out his shooting-iron and gets ready for business.

With two such fire-eaters to handle, one dare not be caught napping or unprepared.

"But, you are sure of your control the beautiful girl over, after she is legally free your guardianship from?"

"Count, I will stake my life on it. Think what I have to risk. If I tell you I have no doubts, surely

you should not complain. All the way to Italy you can exert yourself to please, and the rest leave to me."

"It ees wonderful, this power. Be assured, quite, I shall to it see you have no opportunity to exercise this hypnotism when the charming lady my wife is," asserts the count, stoutly, at which Monks laughs again.

"Devilish little I care ever to see either of them again once the fortune and what you promised, is mine. To Paris I shall go, there to live a high-roller the rest of my days. You know I believe Paris is the only fit place for a man of means—a connoisseur of art, of wine and beautiful women. Hang London or Venice, say I, begging your pardon all the same. But now to work."

"Shall we carry our doves away alone quite?"

"We ought to be equal to it, but I have come prepared for any emergency. Behind me is a little army Falstaff might have been proud of in his day. You shall see. My plan is to knock on their door, to arouse them with the cry that the house is on fire, allowing smoke to drift through the place to add to the deception. Of course they will hastily dress and rush out, when my influence will do the balance. The men can secure their belongings, we

will beat a retreat to the boats, go aboard, and be out of the harbor before crack of dawn. What do you think of the scheme, count?"

"Simply magnificent—superb! I would you back every time, signor colonel. But these men—where are they now?"

"Close at hand and awaiting my signal. You shall look upon them, these battle-scarred tatterdemalions and see to what straits an honest Britisher is put in these days for assistance," and he gives the lantern a whirl around his head as might a night brakeman on an American railroad.

CHAPTER XIX

LET LOOSE THE DOGS OF WAR

There is an immediate response to this prearranged signal of Monks.

A troup of men file into the court. They are a motley crowd indeed, some being native soldiers once drilled under British officers and known as Askaris to distinguish them from the regular Zanzibaris, others thugs from the land of Buddha, and all of them desperadoes dyed in the wool, to judge from their physiognomies.

Evidently they have passed through some tough experiences of late—several have bandages that speak of wounds, and the appearance of the entire collection is dilapidated. They might serve well as a lot of antiques. It is the numerical display more than the ferocious aspect of these warriors that gives Jack some concern.

He counts half a score in all, as they line up in

front of the colonel, making rather a grotesque appearance.

This, with the soldier and the fiery Italian whose lexicon contains no such word as fail, make an even dozen.

Six apiece, for himself and Sir Roderic; or, as the veteran would surely insist on the lion's share, it might be called eight for him to take care of, and four left to Jack.

When one carries a loaded Colt's six shooter and possesses a stout heart, even such fearful odds fail to send a thrill of alarm through the frame. Jack even coolly decides that if it must come to a pitched battle he will endeavor to down the leaders with as much expedition as possible, when the riff-raff of which this modern army of Falstaff is composed will scatter to the four winds.

The count has surveyed the sorry collection of antiques with something of a grin upon his face; but he realizes that as burden bearers these fellows will readily fill the bill.

"A noble company, I assure you quite. We shall the house carry off if it is necessary. And I myself will pleasure take in rewarding them."

One or two of the ragged recruits whose faces while bronzed and begrimed, give evidence of belong-

ing to the Caucasian race, seem to readily grasp the meaning of what the count declares, and give evidence of being on the point of expressing their appreciation in a cheer, when Monks raises his hand in a manner that freezes every sound.

They are under the influence—hypnotized by this wonderful pupil of Svengali; having perhaps been selected because of their being easily susceptible to his power.

"Hush!" says Monks, suddenly.

"What ees it?" demands the excitable Italian, showing signs of trepidation, as he twists his head this way and that, while from under his military cloak he produces a formidable sword, which might make an enemy shudder.

"I heard a sound," declares Monks solemnly.

They all listen intently and to every ear is borne the same noise that came to the keen hearing of the colonel.

Jack moves uneasily.

He can guess what causes the sound, which proceeds from the room where he and the veteran took up their quarters.

Sir Roderic is the guilty wretch.

He has at length been claimed a prisoner, ransom

or no ransom, by the god of slumber, and rolling over upon his back, has fallen into an old trick.

That is a nasal snore which floats upon the flower-scented air, above the noisy fret of the fountain.

The colonel looks at the count.

"Rubini, there's some one in that room yonder. It may be Egypt—however, I shall see. Let every man of you remain like a rock, do you understand?"

They will not move until this master gives the word—to all intents and purposes each man is as thoroughly turned into stone as Lot's inquisitive wife was changed to a pillar of salt.

So Monks, lantern in hand, steals softly forward on his tiptoes, advancing toward the apartment from whence an occasional uneasy snort announces the presence of a sleeper.

It is perhaps fortunate for Jack that he has by accident chosen to advance along the other side of the basin; for had it been to the left that Monks walked the inevitable conflict must have been precipitated then and there regardless of the heavy odds.

Monks reaches the door, he raises the lantern cautiously and apparently takes a hasty survey of the interior.

His amazement must be immense when he discovers the lengthy form of the veteran stretched out upon

a divan, for it is something of a shock for a householder, even in so free a place as Zanzibar, to return unexpectedly and find a stranger in possession.

Monks does not loiter.

He backs away and hastens to rejoin his companion who has remained there with sword half raised as though he too might have been affected by the colonel's singular will power, that can make certain subjects believe anything under heaven.

"Well?" snaps the count eagerly.

"There is a man asleep in the room."

"*Per Bacco!* friend or enemy?"

"The latter. You remember my telling of a soldierly old chap with a white military mustache, who was aboard the launch and who sent those shots from the little cannon with such devilish success—that is the man."

"Do you know him?"

"He is a stranger to me."

"But an enemy?"

"Without doubt."

"Then I shall do it."

"Hold on, don't be rash. He slumbers sweetly, and we must go about things with decency. What would you do, count?"

"Stick him like one pig."

"While he sleeps?" with a sneer, for wretch though he may be Monks has an Englishman's love of fair play back of his evil habits.

"What does it matter—besides, we something risk—why chance our lives to lose?" returns the Italian, who, it need hardly be said, does not represent the brave people whom history honors for their valor upon many a hard fought battlefield.

"Wait. Listen to me. This fellow was with Jack Gordon. We find him here under the roof that shelters Hildegarde. Possibly he is acting as a guardian. We are obliged, but shall relieve him of the duty. What I wish to know is where may Jack Gordon be just now?"

The one who could inform him upon this selfsame point preserves a dead silence though strongly tempted to reveal his presence back of the stone basin.

"Ah! yes, you have of him told me more times than once and always she loves him, she, the star I worship quite. I understand what you wish—it is to excite the blood of a Rubini—to make jealous—well, that you have already accomplish. I hate Jack Gordon like ten thousand what you call him—devils. Is he here—then I no longer desire the life of the man who snores—it is Jack Gordon I shall upon this

trusty blade spit like I have seen fowls before the fire."

The irascible Italian becomes so brimming over with what might be called enthusiasm that he actually dances about, waving his trenchant blade in a fierce manner; but the ten retainers stand there like so many dummies, awaiting the word from Monks that will change their condition from stone to flesh and blood.

Jack has a glimpse of his rival and but for the serious nature of the affair he must indulge in a hearty laugh, so ludicrous does the count appear while giving way to these emotions, dancing up and down, and thrusting his sword through imaginary enemies with the most robust zeal.

Monks is a man with considerable character. Instead of bothering with this hot-brained lover, save to keep out of his reach, he casts his eyes around as though suspecting the presence of the party whom he most desires to meet.

Jack seems to feel those eyes upon him—he could not withdraw his head even should such a notion appear the proper thing when a movement would assuredly betray him.

The colonel takes a step forward.

He means to make assurance doubly sure before

announcing his discovery and letting his hounds slip from the leash.

The silence of a tomb is upon the little court—it is the lull before the crash of battle, an absence of sounds that appears doubly impressive.

Another step—two more—and Jack gathers his muscles together for a tiger bound.

He has even definitely decided just where he will place his first shot in order to do the best execution without actually taking the life of Hildegarde's uncle.

There is such a thing however as counting without one's host, and generally that worthy has much to say about the matter.

As he advances Monks finds his suspicions undoubtedly verified and realizes that a desperate man is crouching there behind the basin, perhaps with a drawn weapon in hand ready to puncture him.

The colonel has objections against serving as a target for any man's pleasure.

He may have shown desperate valor on other fields but that he also possesses a fair amount of discretion he makes manifest now.

Without the least warning as to what he is about to do Monks makes a sudden spring to one side, where his quick eye has caught sight of a pillar that

supports a balcony and which is large enough to shelter his spare figure.

At the same time he bellows lustily with all the power of his lungs:

"At him, my tigers—down with the scamp—Rubini behold the man you long to annihilate—that is Jack Gordon! Now let's see who is the first to clear him out of our path."

CHAPTER XX

HILT TO HILT

Realizing that further concealment is useless, and disdaining to crouch there longer, Jack has sprung to his feet, weapon in hand, and thus awaits the expected rush of the ragged foemen.

Considerably to his surprise not one of them makes a move.

The count's valor does not seem to hold good in face of actual danger—no doubt he knows that he will be the first victim, and the idea fails to strike him favorably. A sword never was the equal of a revolver, since a long reach is the great desideratum in a little affair of this sort, and while the best sword made can not touch over eight feet from the rear foot of the wielder, a bullet can bridge a chasm of as many yards like lightning.

As to the ten men, they stand there as immovable as the eternal hills.

Monks sees and flies into a dreadful passion.

He has a perfect right to hide his precious body behind a shield, since he is the head and brains of the whole enterprise; but these common recruits whom he has bought body and soul, they were hired for the purpose of interposing their wretched forms in case any lead might be flying around loose——therefore he waxes wroth at witnessing their inaction.

"What the devil do you mean, standing there like a parcel of fools when I order you forward. Cut him down—hack him to pieces—away with you!" he cries.

Then one in the line, a fellow with shrewd eyes, and evidently an Englishman, makes reply:

"Colonel, you forget—we can not move—we are *rocks* every one—you said it."

"Confusion! what asses! Then be rocks no longer, but living men, and there is your prey. Ten golden sovereigns to the man whose blade first drinks his blood."

It is enough.

The Askaris and Hindoos yearn to spill English blood—they have seen comrades shot down at their side or scattered to the winds by the awful force of bursting shells without being given a chance to return

the compliment, or harm a single blue-jacket, so that once their freedom of movement is restored by the necromancer who took it away, they make a sudden forward rush.

Jack realizes that the time for action has come and the sooner he gets to work the better, since that whole line of tattered recruits is bearing down on him with deadly intent.

Surely Sir Roderic must have been aroused by the loud cries of Monks—who in his excitement has raised his voice until it resembles the roar of a maddened bull—be he ever so sound a sleeper he must awaken when so much excitement is going on close by, and at any second he can be counted upon to dash out and join in the melee, since a man of his calibre can no more keep out of a fight when the chance comes to enter, than a native of Donnybrook.

Although Gordon has counted on giving the first shot to Monks himself, the sagacity of that long-headed individual has prevented such a presentation being carried out, so that he finds it necessary to bestow his attention to some one of less importance.

There is the count.

What should hinder the Italian from being made the beneficiary of his bounty? He has an over-supply of lead, and surely such an excitable, dane-

ing-dervish sort of a man as Rubini has proven, needs a little extra ballast in order to steady him.

So it is partly from such philanthropical motives that Gordon snaps his revolver with the sight covering the spot where Rubini—had been, for the wily Italian, finding himself the first man in range of the deadly little repeater, drops to the earth, and generously bequeaths the bullet intended for his anatomy to the wretched chap behind him.

The scene is one that would give a painter no little fame could he but catch the spirit of it all, with Jack, a sturdy Briton, at bay, the unkempt hounds swooping down upon him with fury blazing in their eyes, and valiant Colonel Monks, firebrand that he is, daringly looking from behind the stone pillar, and actually inviting a bullet in his arm by holding out the lantern in order that the work of destruction may proceed apace.

There is one other point of which mention must be made, even at the risk of delaying the meeting of the opposing forces for a few seconds longer.

A form has appeared back in the dim recess under the balcony, where entrance can be gained to the room transformed by our two comrades into a bivouac—a form that resolves itself into the figure of a man advancing with quick bounds, tugging at a sword

which somehow shows an aversion to being divorced from its scabbard.

Of course, this is Sir Roderic, who snuffs the smoke of battle, and who delights in the turmoil of strife as thoroughly as did our old friends those other men of war, the three musketeers of Dumas's creation.

Almost in a jiffy that peaceful little court, with its flowers and murmuring fountain, is transformed into an arena, where men of brawn and savage passions struggle for the supremacy with as much ferocity as ever Roman gladiators showed in the days of that old tyrant Nero.

It would be impossible to give the battle in detail, so many things can happen within a limited space of time, but the only spectator, Monks himself, does not appear to be wholly satisfied with the way in which his men manage their case.

They are in overwhelming numbers, and should be able to close the debate in short order, but somehow the result hangs in doubt.

Finally Monks, who has been shouting all manner of orders to his men without being able to aid them to wrest victory from the melee, grows astonishingly bold, and actually issues forth from his place of

concealment, still holding the lighted lantern, which is the only thing between them and darkness.

Perhaps he hopes for a chance to get a hand in the scrimmage, without exposing himself too rashly—such men are ever ready to help along a good cause—to give in abundance when blows are trumps, without being willing to turn recipients.

In the conglomeration of struggling forms he can discover one who towers above the rest.

This is Sir Roderic.

By a herculean effort the soldier of fortune has torn his trusty blade loose from its moorings, and when the dark-skinned tigers leap at him with their naked knives, they meet a wall of steel through which the best among them finds it impossible to pass.

From this flashing barrier there darts from time to time a living tongue that never returns without having elicited a groan or a wild curse from one of those who wield the knives.

Monks, being an old military man, sees at a glance that from the way things are going it is only a picnic for the hand back of the sword.

Given five minutes more of the same business, and if nothing out of the usual run occurs to block his game Sir Roderic, the magician of the sword, will have pinked every man of them more or less severely,

while Jack, holding his antagonists at bay with his revolver, in which several charges yet remain, can wind up the affair with a grand hurrah. The sight, while inspiring enough provided one is interested on the right side, almost causes Monks to choke with fury.

He can not remember ever having seen two men hold half a score at bay, and lays it all to the fact that his minions are natives instead of Caucasians, never once taking into consideration the fact that one of this heroic twain is a man of war who has learned his trade upon the battlefields of the last four decades.

With the sole intention of stinging their pride and thus spurring his dusky braves on to more desperate exertions, Monks again breaks loose, and proceeds to make things lively, although with a result not anticipated.

"Break away there—you are too many in front—you get in each other's way—surround the old tiger—he has no arms to cover his rear—at him again, and close in—serve you right Yajeda for trying such a fool stroke. Oh! you idiots, such play would make a horse laugh. I tell you, every one of you is a stupid jackass—do you hear, a jackass, only fit to kick up his heels and bray!"

He fairly shrieks this out in his vindictive fury at seeing how futile their efforts seem.

The result is most marvelous indeed—in all his vast experience Sir Roderic never saw anything equal to it, and to his dying day Jack Gordon must remember it as the strangest, most ridiculous event of his life.

These fellows are still under the influence of the wonderful hypnotizer—when he told them to fight like demons from Tophet they actually believed they were doing great things, and possibly supposed the enemy was being mowed down in whole platoons.

When one of them was pinked by that flashing sword, as he made a lunge at Sir Roderic, perhaps his pain was rendered less severe because he actually harbored the delusion that he had reduced the number of his antagonists, for anything is possible to a soul that knows no volition save the will of another.

Behold this master who controls their imagination and plays upon their minds with the freedom a professor might show in rattling the ivory keys of a piano—this magician, gifted by nature with a power that is supernatural, has just declared in the most vehement tones that they are each and every one jackasses—he has even gone to the pains to particularize the only success they are likely to achieve in this world.

Hence, every man of them who hears, immediately conceives the notion that he has been turned into a long-eared beast of burden.

It is as though the wand of a wizard has changed the tragedy of battle into a roaring farce.

Sir Roderic bursts into an uproarious laugh, while Jack stands mute with amazement.

Some of the poor devils actually get down on all fours and prance around, kicking their heels up into the air like the most frolicsome of donkeys.

Others give forth ear-piercing sounds of diabolical construction, evidently intended in good faith to resemble the innocent "hee-haw" of the long-eared, patient beast of burden so familiar in all Oriental countries.

Taken in all it would appear as though Bedlam has broken loose, or the inmates of some madhouse been induced to enact a play.

Monks is so thoroughly discouraged and disgusted by this unexpected evidence of his unlimited power over the minds of his subjects, that for the moment he is speechless and can only stare as though deprived of his senses.

So absolutely does mind control matter that even the wounded wretch on the ground, who has believed himself stricken almost unto death, raises his form,

arches his back, and gives one feeble kick at vacancy. It is no doubt a highly entertaining, moral show, but Monks has not come here in the character of manager, and can hardly appreciate the amazing result of his own powers.

After his spell of bewilderment has lasted a minute or so, it gives place to fury.

A spasm sweeps over him—are his plans, so carefully laid, to be wrecked by a lot of crazy fools—is this what he has returned to Zanzibar, risking his precious neck for?

"Oh! you dolts, you idiots—I would it were in my power to grow donkey ears and a tail on each of you—then the rest of your days should be spent in cropping thistles. Listen to me—hear me declare you are no longer jackasses but devils from the lower regions, sent here to drag these two men down to the lake of burning brimstone, do you hear me, fiends of Tophet with horns and a cloven hoof—and now every rascal of you throw yourselves at the throats of our enemies and drag them down—drag them down!"

Monks fairly shrieks the last word, as his men cease their "horse play" and make a combined rush upon their intended prey.

In his frenzy the colonel, possibly unconscious of

what he is about, whirls the lantern violently around his head.

It strikes some obstacle—there is a jingling sound of broken glass. Then intense darkness.

If Monks has made this move simply as a result of accident, it is the luckiest thing in the world for him.

His men, imbued with the idea that they are demons from the Inferno, no longer fear death in any form, but hurl themselves upon their foes, with the determination that the affair shall be fought out then and there. Jack, unable to use his revolver to good advantage, because he can only see by its flash after a discharge, is immediately beset on all sides, and in danger of receiving a fatal wound.

He knows that Sir Roderic has twice as many foes to contend with, so that he may look for no assistance from that quarter.

All that remains is for him to strike out manfully just so long as strength remains, and if compelled to give up the ghost, let the end find him face to the foe as every Anglo-Saxon loves to die.

Again and again does he strike out with clenched fist and revolver, and every time there is a result to his blows.

Still the unseen foes press upon him apparently

without number, and he has been wounded in many places.

Around him can be heard horrid sounds as the veteran battles for his life.

And while these noises of the deadly strife still ring in his ears, Jack Gordon experiences a sensation as though a wall must have toppled over upon him—the roar of battle dies away to a faint murmur—he tries to call out, but his tongue refuses to do its duty—then comes a terrible blank.

BOOK THREE

THE CHASE OF THE THREE FRIENDS

CHAPTER XXI

AFTER THE BATTLE

When Jack Gordon's senses slowly return to him, time has elapsed.

The first gray streaks of dawn are creeping through the windows of the rooms and the open court above.

He lies there somewhat in a tangled maze wondering where he can be. The murmur of the fountain is a lazy, dreamy rhythm and lulls his suspicions.

Gradually he collects his energies, and opens his eyes. The dawn has advanced enough for him to see the fountain, the blue sky above and the bushes near by laden with flowers.

Where can he be, what has happened?—how sweet the perfumed air and with what dreamy melody the water gurgles.

This arouses him to the discovery that his throat

is badly parched and a longing arises for some of that cooling liquid.

As he attempts to raise one of his arms he discovers that it is held down by some weight that seems to paralyze that section of his body.

Then making a violent effort he manages to sit up, only to increase his bewilderment.

The object which has pinned him to the ground is nothing more nor less than a human form, a body from which the breath of life has fled and in the increasing light Jack makes it out to be a Zanzibari.

And even as he looks, the truth flashes upon him in great waves—he remembers it all, from the hour when his rescue from the palace dungeon occurred up to the time Monks turned his aggregation of rascals upon them. How long has he lain here?—several hours, to judge by the coming of dawn.

Did they leave him for dead? Well he may be minus a quantity of blood but with every passing minute he feels new strength returning and considers himself worth several dead men yet.

So he staggers to his feet, and reaching the stone curb of the basin laves his throbbing face in the cool water.

It refreshes him beyond description and leaning against the coping he looks around.

It is a gruesome scene.

That little court had erstwhile been a thing of beauty but now it appears a wreck—bushes are trampled down and besides the body that had lain across him, Jack can discover others.

An awful apprehension almost overwhelms him.

What of Sir Roderic?

They say the pitcher may go to the well once too often—Cavendish has always expected to die as he has lived, by the sword—can he have met his Waterloo here in this Zanzibar court?

And Hildegarde—Jack's heart grows cold as ice when he remenbers what Monks said to the Italian count about leaving on the latter's steam yacht at a time before dawn came.

Then they are gone, and all his labor has been for naught!

The realization almost overpowers him and a groan forces itself from his lips. What is that—an echo?

Surely an answering groan came—perhaps one of the poor devils on the ground still lives.

This causes Jack to remember again that he had a comrade, and a curiosity arises within his mind as to what has happened to the old fire-eater.

Though their acquaintance only dates back twenty-four hours Gordon somehow feels as though he has

known the hero of the Crimea as many years and it is with genuine anxiety that he begins his search.

That some disaster has befallen Sir Roderic he is positive, for the veteran would never leave the scene of action while the fate of a comrade hung in the balance.

In another minute Jack finds himself looking down upon a scene he will never forget so long as he lives —such is terrible nature.

Several forms are huddled together in one quarter of the court, and Sir Roderic lies under a great swarthy Askaris who had evidently borne him down at the very instant Cavendish ran his sword completely through another of his enemies.

They three all appear to have crossed the river Styx in company. Jack can see that Cavendish has with his left hand gripped the throat of the giant upon his chest. A yataghan has been plunged into the veteran's body and in the absence of attention he has bled to death.

That is Jack's first notion, but he does not know how like a cat with nine lives Sir Roderic has proven in the past—some men can pass through experiences that would easily finish the ordinary individual and still survive.

Even as he looks sorrowfully upon the form of the

veteran Jack receives a shock. Surely one of Sir Roderic's eyes opened a trifle as though in returning conciousness he might be trying to get his bearings.

That groan, then, came from him.

Forgetting his own wounds Jack sets to work with tremendous energy—he drags the giant Askaris aside, he carefully removes the ugly steel of the yataghan and discovers that being poorly aimed in the dark it has pierced a shoulder but apparently touched no vital point.

Then he is electrified by hearing the man whom he believed to be dead say calmly,

"Gordon, this is what I call beastly luck."

"God be praised you are alive, my friend," exclaims Jack fevently.

The soldier sits up.

"Well, I got a neat cut that time, but a miss is as good as a mile, and I shall pull through all right. It gives me a grim sort of satisfaction to know I brought two birds down with me. Taken all in all that was a lively little affair, Jack. I had just such an experience when with the Gordon relief column under Earle we whipped the tribesmen of the Soudan at Kirbedan, and Earle lost his life. I think I held twenty Arabs at bay that day but went under at last.

After the battle they pulled me out from beneath a pile of dead men, and fanned the spark of life back. It is not fated I should die yet. This wound will give me a little inconvenience but that is all. We can consider ourselves lucky indeed—by Jove! I forgot" suddenly, as the nature of their presence in this house of old Zanzibar breaks upon him.

"The women—I fear they are gone," says Jack gloomily.

"That would be tough, indeed. Have you made a search, my dear boy?"

"Not yet. I only now recovered my senses."

"Then do so without delay. I will endeavor to patch up this cut of mine temporarily as I feel that I should not spare any more blood. I'm afraid there is work for us to do yet. Go and see if you can find them, Jack."

Gordon needs no further urging—he even runs eagerly and searches for some means of communication with the upper floor.

Again and again as he searches he raises his voice and calls her name, but only the mocking echoes answer.

Hildegarde is no longer under that roof nor does he discover a living soul, even the black Egypt having fled or been carried off to wait upon the ladies.

Jack is a man and while this disaster gives him great pain, he bears up bravely—all is not lost while life remains, and since he already knows Hildegarde's heart belongs to him he is in a condition to grit his teeth, gird on his armor, and have one more wrestle with the enemy.

Reaching the side of his friend he finds that Richard is himself again.

Sir Roderic always goes prepared for such an emergency, and during the course of his long experience he has picked up considerable knowledge of surgery. so that he found little difficulty in getting a bandage ready, with absorbant cotton saturated with some such drug as hammamelis which would assist in stopping the bleeding.

This, with Jack's assistance, is fastened over the wound in his left shoulder, and when he has dashed some cold water in his face the brave old soldier declares himself in pretty fair trim.

Ere leaving the scene of the tragedy he insists on recovering his sword.

That weapon is identified with numerous gallant scenes in his past, and he would be loth to lose it.

They have hastily talked the matter over and come to the conclusion that their only hope is in the steam yacht of the Italian being rounded up by the gun-

boats and not allowed to leave the harbor of Zanzibar.

Hence as soon as Sir Roderic finds himself in condition to walk they issue forth from the house which has been the scene of so strange a battle.

It is just morning.

Zanzibar is waking up.

The usual sounds of an Oriental town may be heard on every hand. Already has the furious bombardment of yesterday become a memory, and the inhabitants fall into their accustomed ways.

On all sides of them the two friends see queer sights as they make their way along in the direction of the harbor. Several times their progress is halted by groups of marines who patrol the streets, armed for hot work.

England has treated this trouble with heroic measures, which in the end always command respect from barbarian rebels—force is what compels their natures to bow down, and not diplomacy.

At length the harbor stretches before them in the first rays of the rising sun, for old Phœbus speedily follows on the heels of darkness in this semi-tropical clime and they eagerly scan the surface of the water.

CHAPTER XXII

CHAUNCEY THROWS HIS GLOVE INTO THE ARENA

The British war-vessels are anchored at some little distance, their grim-looking guns still frowning upon the city.

Small boats can be seen moving to and from the shore, while in another quarter a number of masts indicate the presence of ships that have stopped at Zanzibar to collect or leave a cargo.

A steamer has arrived during the night and lies anchored not far from the cruiser St. George—possibly on her way to or from England by way of the Suez canal.

These things Jack sees at a glance as his eyes sweep over the picture, but what he most desires to discern is conspicuous by its absence.

He would like to discover a steam yacht with an Italian flag floating at its stern, close by one of the

gunboats, and evidently held in port by orders from the admiral.

His eyes look beyond the harbor to where the sun-kissed waves of the open sea are dancing merrily in the early morning breeze.

A line of smoke, a distant moving object catches his sight, and he points it out to Sir Roderic.

There can be little doubt but what it is the steam yacht, already beginning to head toward the Red sea.

Jack is unable to suppress his feelings longer and breaks out into what is rather harsh language for him; but the veteran soothes him in his gentle way, and the indomitable spirit that is a part of his nature speedily communicates its fever to Gordon, so that the old resolution never to give up the ship is born anew in his heart.

"Ah! by Jove, pwaps the glass might come in vewy appwopwiate, my deah boy," says a voice almost at their feet, and behold, there is Chauncey, as big as life, reaching the marine glasses out of the little cabin of his launch, which they have failed to observe up to this moment, so eagerly have they scanned the water.

Jack quickly avails himself of the privilege, and

has hardly clapped the glasses to his eyes than he utters a cry.

"They are gone," he explains.

Sir Roderick in turn takes a squint, and immediately recognizes in the flag at the stern of the miniature steamship, the well-known emblem of Italy.

Of course this removes the last vestige of doubt from their minds, and they know the worst.

There is something valuable in this, since they can now figure on the future, knowing the destination of the steam yacht.

To reach Venice, upon the blue Adriatic, is now Jack Gordon's aim; and Sir Roderic, who feels somehow that he has a deep interest in this whole matter, gives him positive assurance that where Jack goes there his business lies also, which evidence of friendship warms the young fellow's heart exceedingly.

Chauncey has listened to their talk with considerable interest. He already knows something of the affair, and is soon put into possession of the strange events of the night, which naturally enough arouse his wonder.

It is his first acquaintance with war, and and these two new-made friends have quite struck his fancy; for really there is much more to the little swell than

appears on the outside. His outrageous manner is only a shell, a sort of mask, behind which lurks a philosopher. So Oscar Wilde deluded people for years with his quaint and even ridiculous æstheticism, while back of it all he amused himself in finding out what "fools these mortals be."

Chauncey P. Greene may appear pretty much of a crank and even a fool; but when the emergency arises that calls for real manhood, he will be found facing the music. All that can be said of him is that he may be set down as an oddity.

Of course Jack's thoughts turn in the one direction—how can they reach Venice in time—when will a steamer from the Cape touch at Zanzibar?

Chauncey is able to tell them that the one now anchored in the harbor is bound south, for he expects to have some news of his companions by her.

It is of the utmost importance that they know what they have to expect as soon as possible, and with this object in view they separate, but not before they agree to join the skipper of the launch in a little mid-day spread with which he desires to honor them.

Jack and Sir Roderic give little thought to feasting, but Chauncey seems to have so set his mind upon having them, and they feel under heavy obliga-

tions for the service he did them, that they consent. Which after all is but one of those little links in the chain by which their fortunes are bound.

There is some satisfaction at least in learning that a steamer is due from the Cape, the fastest in the line, so that in all probability they may leave Zanzibar and its strange people behind before another day dawns.

Meanwhile Sir Roderic has gone on board and had his wounds attended to by the ship's surgeon, who is amazed at the many cicatrices of former hurts which the veteran carries. This will but add another to the list, and he treats it lightly enough.

At noon the steamer has not yet arrived, though overdue.

Meeting Jack at the appointed rendezvous, the veteran hears what their chances are. He has already made all arrangements for a transfer of his baggage from the war ship on which he has been an honored guest.

So they bring up at the moored launch, to carry out their agreement with Chauncey.

As soon as they set eyes on that worthy, it is plainly evident to them that something has occurred to upset him.

True, he has arranged quite a jolly spread in the

cabin of the launch, where it is almost necessary to climb over the table in order to reach the further end—all manner of dainties such as may be found put up in tins these progressive days, besides many fruits peculiar to Zanzibar, grace the boards, while several suspicious bottles cooling in a bucket suggest champagne.

Instead of Chauncey appearing in one of his uproarious moods, he is quite subdued. The two friends notice it but refrain from asking questions, confident that the little swell can not long retain the secret.

Soon they are seated at the spread and enjoying the good things with such appetites that they did not dream of possessing.

And while they partake, very naturally the two who are so deeply interested in the coming of the north bound steamer fall to speaking of the plans that are in their minds, while Greene listens eagerly, his face gradually losing its apathetic expression, as though he has found a glimmer of light.

"Ah, beg pawdon, but do you know, I am inclined to awsk a gweat favor of you two gentlemen," he finally stammers.

"Anything we can do you have only to mention, my dear fellow," returns Jack, with a glance at the

soldier who nods vigorously, and looks wise, as though he may have already anticipated what is coming.

"Pwaps I am too pwesumptious—too wash. My company may not be quite agweeable. On the whole, I wather think I wont say it."

"Nonsense!" exclaims Jack, stretching his rugged hand across the little table, "we have taken a decided fancy to you, Greene. If there is any chance of our seeing more of you in the future, rest assured we shall be only too well pleased."

"Ditto," remarks the soldier.

Chauncey seems to be deeply affected.

"By Jove!" he says, in broken sentences, "I never dweamed I could take such a fauncy, you know, to any one so quickly. But awfter that little skwimmage yesterday it seemed to me as though we were bwothers in awms, don'tcherknow, and that by Jove! I had been acquainted with you both all my life. Now, it's weal kind of you to give me such a woyal send-off, to be sure, and I'm going to old Venice with you, dead certain."

"What! and give up this great exploring trip to the headwaters of the Zambesi and the Congo!" exclaims Gordon.

"And keep a wretched world in darkness concerning the wonderful things to be found in that re-

gion of darkest Africa!" from the veteran, *sotto voce*. "Think how disappointed those comrades of yours will be when they arrive here and find you have left them in the lurch."

"By Jove! that's what's the matter with me. It's all owing to those wetched chappies, and their total ignowance concerning the first pwinciples of sailing a boat. By Jove! now what d'ye think they did?"

"Had a wreck, perhaps," suggests Sir Roderic wickedly.

"By Jove! that's it exactly. The steamer bwought me a letter from Chawlie Gwampus. This is all he says: 'Yacht wecked, total loss, all lives saved, boys concluded to give up the expedition and weturn home. Sorry to disappoint you, old man. Each stand a share of the expense. Not cut out for explorers. Go it alone and yours be the glory. Chawlie.'"

"That fellow goes right at the mark. Well, I see your plans are shaken up. You don't want to go it alone—no sane man would. If I had the time, I'd propose a trip with you, but you understand we have other fish to fry now. So come and join us and welcome, Greene."

"By Jove! I will. They can get the launch on board easily enough, and I shall use the little beauty

on the gwand canal of Venice. Shake hands over the bawgain. Fwom this hour we are thwee insepawables, and by Jove! I shall dawnce at the wedding yet."

CHAPTER XXIII

FAREWELL TO ZANZIBAR

Over that table in the dandy cedar launch they map out their plans for the campaign, which, if the favoring winds of fortune blow their way, will complete the discomfiture of Colonel Monks and his Italian ally, the count.

Jack speaks of different things in the past that are connected with the affair and by degrees Chauncey learns through what a series of romantic adventures Gordon has pursued his case.

He becomes decidedly enthusiastic, since this is the very first chance he has ever had to meet with a hero and it completely eclipses anything he has read in the latest novels.

Now and then the horizon, so far as it can be seen from their lowly point of observation, is swept with the marine glass, in the hope of discovering the smoke of the steamer.

At two o'clock Jack finds her out and in another hour her position can be readily discerned with the naked eye.

They will consider themselves lucky if they have a last glimpse of Zanzibar on the following morning. That would give the yacht twenty-four hours the advantage.

She is not so fast as the steamer, but with a fair start and no ports to stop at by the way the smaller boat should get through the Red sea first; however Sir Roderic proposes a plan whereby they may take advantage of rapid railway transportation from some point in Greece, that may yet land them at their destination ahead of the others.

To some natures there is no such word as fail—no sooner does defeat stare them in the face than, like General Grant on the road to Richmond, they make a sudden flank movement that recovers all lost ground.

That is Sir Roderic's way always—and the man who pursues it through life is bound to succeed just as surely as the magnetic needle points to the North Pole.

The steamer is now in plain sight and they set to work giving Chauncey assistance in getting his boat in such order that it can be raised aboard the

steamer with the appliances on board for carrying out such a feat.

Money certainly accomplishes wonders in this world, and smooths the way for the fortunate possessor. Chauncey knows no lack of the ducats—all he desires is some novel kind of sport to arouse his ambition. He had hoped to find it in an African wilderness with half a dozen chappies very like himself, but for the wrecking of the yacht on the coast near Aden and the return of the disgusted tenderfoot adventurers.

Perhaps it is a fortunate thing the singular expedition fell through. Whenever Sir Roderic mentally pictures half a dozen howling swells like unto Chauncey P. Greene penetrating the heart of blackest Africa he is appalled at what awful result their appearance might have had upon the wretched natives.

Greene is just as well pleased, perhaps better satisfied than he cares to admit. He has conceived a great "fauncy," as he terms it, for these two comrades and rather enjoys the prospect of spending the fall months knocking about wonderful Venice and the beautiful blue Adriatic sea, rather than being lost in the wilds of Africa and possibly eaten by some cannibal tribe.

At evening the steamer has anchored in the harbor and our friends are the first on board.

Great is the interest of the passengers and crew when they hear the news of the bombardment, and as they are nearly all Britons it may be safely assumed that their patriotism reaches a high water mark.

No wonder an Englishman is so proud of his claim to the title—there is no nation on the face of the planet that protects its sons with anything like the jealousy Great Britain shows. In order to rescue one Englishman in durance vile an expedition has been taken over deserts hundreds of miles across, and operations at Dahomey, Ashantee, with hosts of other cases attest the devotion to a principle that has made the Cross of St. George respected above all other flags among nations civilized and barbarous.

The naphtha launch is taken alongside and slung aboard with little trouble, thanks to the powerful donkey engines used for that purpose.

They take a last look at the city of Zanzibar just before night swings over the scene of the late insurrection, and perfect quiet seems to reign. The natives desire no further acquaintance with the iron teeth of the gunboats.

One experience usually suffices, just as it did at

Alexandria—a firm grip of the mailed hand and the lesson has been learned for ages.

Let us be thankful that there always follows in the wake of that iron grip the enlightening powers of civilization.

Having been snugly accommodated on board the steamer the three friends sit on deck until late in the night, smoking and chatting.

Chauncey has taken a tremendous fancy to the old warrior, and resorts to all manner of devices in order to induce him to relate some of the strangest things that have happened in his experience of twoscore years in the world's war-clouds.

It is not difficult to get Sir Roderic talking about these things.

He has reached an age where reminiscences throng the mind, and the bandage across his shoulder revives scenes in the past when some similar wound gave him a close call with the dread spectre whose breath is an icy chill and whose embrace carries mortals to oblivion.

It is a rare treat to Chauncey to lie in a comfortable reclining chair and looking upon the lights gleaming here and there throughout the Arab town, where the blast of battle has so recently been spent, listen to Sir Roderic's glowing description of how he

traveled from the highlands of Thibet to the sunny slopes of India on a yak, his wonderful adventures among the Hindoos and finally his joining a caravan bound through the famous Khyber Pass in the Suliman range, the gateway between the low, fertile plains south of the Himalayas and the high region of Iran.

Of course he did not reach Afghanistan without an encounter with the fierce robber tribes always on the alert to gobble up a rich caravan.

They descended upon the travelers while still in the Khyber Pass and there ensued one of the hottest little engagements in all Sir Roderic's experience.

Although he is too modest to claim the glory, still there can be no doubt but that the fierce tribesmen were finally beaten off through the exercise of his military knowledge.

It was a narrow "squeak" as he confesses and came very near being his last battle, as he was severely wounded, but thanks to the careful nursing received from grateful traveling companions, and a sturdy constitution, he pulled through.

At length the friends retire.

There is abundance of room, the rush of travel being mostly toward the El Dorado of South Africa, so

that each has been given a separate stateroom, for which they are grateful.

Jack is awakened in the morning by sounds above his head on deck, and upon opening one of the bulls-eyes in his room he finds they are certainly underway.

He reaches the deck just in time to have a farewell view of the harbor town now some miles astern, with its sentry men of war and its peculiar buildings resembling a collection of mud colored tents more than residences, as seen in the glow of the early morning's blush.

Then comes Sir Roderic, also anxious to get a whiff of fresh air.

Together they walk briskly up and down the hurricane deck of the staunch liner, ever and anon casting their eyes back to the scenes of their recent exploits.

These may appear pretty much like a dream as time moves on but such events can never pass entirely from the mind. Years hence the young Briton may recall them, just as Sir Roderic now does tragic occurrences of the dim past, and in the recital live once more through his Zanzibar experience, hear again the roar of the bombardment and bring to mind

the chase of the slave dhows, the rescue of Hildegarde from the sinking boat, the running of the gantlet, the battle with wind and wave, and finally the desperate encounter in the little court beside the dripping fountain, when a cruel fortune tied them by the heels, as it were, while the enemy triumphed.

Still, the veteran proves to Jack how much they have to be thankful for. Had the blow that stretched young Gordon upon the stone flagging been a little heavier, or the yataghan driven into the shoulder of Sir Roderic been aimed three inches lower, they would ere now be under the sand.

Thus he cheers Jack up with the rainbow of promise, this royally good companion, and they lay plans for the future.

Then comes Chauncey with his irresistible ways, and they form quite a merry party.

Zanzibar is hardly more than a speck along the southern horizon when they go down to breakfast and an hour later, as they once more seek the hurricane deck, it has quite vanished from view.

Thus the scene shifts from the Arab city on the fair east coast of Africa, where some day in the dim future, under the fostering care of Great Britain a barbarous people may be brought to accomplish great

wonders, to other regions more favored, where hundreds of years ago art and the muses occupied the attention of a highly cultivated nation—to Venice, beautiful queen of the Adriatic.

CHAPTER XXIV

TO LOSE THE MAID AND WIN THE WIDOW

Of course there is no chance of learning anything in connection with the steam yacht of the Italian count until they reach Aden, at the mouth of the Red sea.

Eagerly Jack waits for the chance to ask questions, though quite aware of the fact that the absence of knowledge on the part of the port officials will not indicate that they have forged ahead, as the yacht might pursue the even tenor of her way without stopping.

Aden is another of those tremendously important coigns of advantage held by British garrisons all over the world, of which Gibraltar, Bermuda and Vancouver are fair specimens.

When they arrive our friends go ashore to see the hottest station England holds among all her posses-

sions, and of which Tommy Atkins has a horror almost as great as of purgatory—indeed, many are of the belief that Aden must be that same outskirt of Hades.

Jack speedily learns that those they seek are still ahead.

The yacht only left Aden six hours before their casting anchor.

This will be twelve ere the time of departure comes, but the count intends making a temporary stop at the Italian colony of Massowah, urged by some patriotic motive.

Thus it is something of a race all the way up the Red sea.

Once they actually sight the little vessel and pass it by.

Intense excitement reigns among our friends who utilize marine glasses with splendid effect, for the ladies are discovered waving snowy kerchiefs under the colored awning.

The distance is great, and little do those on the yacht suspect who it is answered their friendly signals.

At Suez, while they are unloading, the steam yacht again passes and enters the canal. This arouses Jack to renewed exertions. He has kept under cover

while the yacht is near, and eagerly watches for a glimpse of the dearest girl in all the world, but it is late at night, and though he makes out the figures of gentlemen smoking, he is disappointed otherwise.

After consultation with the captain they find they will save much time by crossing the strip of desert by rail, bringing up in Alexandria, from whence a steamer may be taken for some point in Europe, where another short trip by rail will land them at Venice.

So they start on the morning train.

Fortune is kind in that they just catch a small steamer about to leave Alexandria, and her first port on the European coast is Brindisi, in southeastern Italy.

Here they are landed in good shape at half-past six in the morning.

Inquiry develops the fact that at six forty-five a train leaves for the north.

If they lose this a day is wasted.

Talk of hustle, they cause the most intense excitement around that section—twenty men fly this way and that to do something for the three foreigners who scatter their coins with such a lavish hand.

The luggage is snatched up and bodily carried off

while others endeavor to hurry the travelers along, hopeful of being in the general distribution when success follows.

They make it with only a minute to spare.

It is just as well, for could that section of time be drawn out to five, all of them must have been absolutely bankrupt with regard to small change; since on all the earth there does not exist more persistent beggars than the Italian hordes—they actually excel in voracity the importunate pauper Irish or the dusky sons of the desert at the pyramids.

The ride is uneventful.

Jack endeavors to bribe the driver of the motor to double their pace, but as they are already up to schedule time he fails in his scheme.

Time drags heavily on his hands, and he never passed a more restless day.

On the other hand Sir Roderic manages to extract considerable amusement out of the trip, and Chauncey has several ridiculous adventures at various stations, being almost kidnapped once by a lot of female beggars, at which the veteran warns him not to smile at the poor things in such a ravishing way, though Greene declares they sought to rob him of his valuables rather than his affections.

Italian trains do not make lightning time, and in a

journey of something like five hundred miles they can only expect to reach their destination in the morning.

At Rimini they leave the coast and head inland to Bologna, then traveling to Padua, and finally turn east again, headed for Venice, now about twenty-five miles away.

As the train passes over the trestle spanning the great stretch of marsh and water separating Venice from the mainland, the sun is rising, and never will the travelers forget the beauty of that spectacle.

Far away stretches the blue Adriatic, already dotted with the vari-colored sails of fishing and trading boats, eager to catch the early breeze. Never was sea so blue, so beautiful.

Then the multitude of houses in quaint shapes and patterns add to the picturesqueness, for the Venetians do love color above everything, and many a building is gaily painted, just as the sails of pleasure craft are pink or yellow, blue or green, as fancy dictates.

There rises a stately pile, gloomy but grand—a palace where a doge may have lived in the days of yore, when Venice was a power in the land.

Near by is an Oriental looking cathedral, and not

far away the lofty bell tower known far and wide as the famous Campanile.

Here are canals running in every direction, yet all debouching into the Grand Canal—over them are arched bridges.

Vehicles are almost unknown—one must walk or take a gondola, although by degrees the modern small steamboat has been introduced, and despite the hatred of all bigoted Venetians, proves very convenient when time is a factor. Everything connected with the age of romance must by degrees go down before the bustle of business enterprise, and possibly ere many years have fled the wonderful gondola, a distinctive feature of Venetian canal life, may be hardly more than a dream.

Then there is the Bridge of Sighs through which condemned prisoners were wont to pass from the hall of justice to the prison across the way—and the Rialto—who has not heard of this remarkable bridge, with its shops and its daily throngs from every country under the sun, where an observer is treated to a kaleidoscopic view of human nature such as it would be difficult to find elsewhere.

All these things and many more our travelers may look upon in Venice.

To painters it is a Mecca which draws them as no

other city can—where they pick up types of every romantic description—where the background, the highly colored costumes, the very atmosphere itself seems to breathe of art; and where treasures may be found that tell of the glory once resting on this favored queen of the waters.

Jack's mind is bent on business just now, and all else must play second fiddle to his eager desire for news of the yacht.

Just as soon as he leaves the train, he engages a shrewd looking cicerone picked out by Sir Roderic, who has an eye for the right man in an emergency.

The veteran has promised to see the luggage taken by gondola to the caravansary where they intend stopping.

Purposely he has selected a modest house having a frontage on the Merceria, the main street of the city, almost twenty feet in width, and lined with stores which attract the eye on account of the lavish display of beautiful goods, for these shopkeepers of quaint old Venice have learned all the tricks of their Parisian masters, and show exceeding cunning in tempting the coveted coins to leave their lurking places in the pockets of passersby.

So Sir Roderic sees to the transfer of trunks and various paraphernalia, and is just in the act of

paying the gondolier after the same have been delivered at the back door of the small hotel, once a palace, by the way, when that necromancer, luck, enters into the game.

A gondola sweeps by—mechanically Sir Roderic glances in at the occupants and behold, looks upon the face of Jack's sweetheart.

She is looking directly at him, and he imagines he sees a flash of glad recognition pass over her lovely features.

Obedient to the dictates of his cautious nature he immediately steps backward out of sight fearful lest other eyes may be turned that way, for without a doubt the curtains of the gondola conceal the rest of the party.

Since fortune has been so very kind he can not refuse to accept the chance offered. Entering his gondola he directs the boatman to cautiously follow, at a distance sufficiently remote so that no suspicion may be aroused.

Thus he soon finds himself upon that artery of water travel in Venice, the Grand Canal, moving past grim palaces and meeting with fleets of boats speeding in and out as the whim or business of their owners dictates.

Nor does Sir Roderic think his pursuit has been

time wasted when, from the shelter of his black-cabined craft so like a "coffin on a raft" as some poet has described a gondola, he sees the party disembark at a gloomy pile which his gondolier informs him is the Palace Rubini, one of the most romantic in Venice, and which has had an intimate connection with the history of past centuries.

Sir Roderic cares not a picayune about all this just now—however interested he might be at another time, it falls unheeded on his ears as might so much rubbish.

The cause is not hard to discover.

There is a woman in the case.

As the gondola floats by the stone landing where the little party stands, the soldier, peeping out from behind his friendly curtains, vouchsafes but a glance on Colonel Monks and the olive-visaged Italian nobleman.

Even the young girl's fresh and lovely face does not hold his attention.

There is one other—the widow!

She has thrown back her veil and idly watches the gondola glide by like a thing of life, little dreaming who is aboard.

Sir Roderic sees a rather buxom but stylish figure, a face that is exceedingly handsome in spite of its

crown of gray hair, and he holds his breath, for this is the first time his eyes have fallen upon the Hildegarde he once so madly loved, since their separation, some twenty years in the dim past; and to himself the old bachelor warrior is saying confusedly, while he feels his traitor heart pounding against his ribs:

"She is the same witch as ever, and wretched man that I am, I believe she still has the power to enthrall me. I lost the maid—what an irony of fate if I should after all these years win the widow?"

CHAPTER XXV

TOLD IN THE CAFFE QUADRI

Meanwhile Jack and Chauncey have entrusted themselves to the guidance of the cicerone, who promises all they desire.

Of course his name is Antonio—that might be expected; but they forgive the fates that inflict such an old classic upon them, because he seems to be such an obliging chap, anticipating their every want.

Indeed, it is Chauncey who later on, in describing the desire of the old courier to please declares, with solemn assurance that he had occasion to sneeze, but somehow was just unable to complete the circuit—every one has been through the same experience and can sympathize with his misery.

Imagine his amazement when the "padrone," as he called the guide, who had been anxiously watching his facial contortions suddenly gave vent to a most sonorous "achew" twice repeated.

Chauncey Greene declared that he immediately felt relieved.

This little incident will doubtless be quite sufficient to stamp the obliging character of the cicerone upon the reader's mind.

Under his guidance they are speedily upon the quay of the Campo dei Mori and looking eagerly in every direction for some sign of the steam yacht.

Quickly Jack discovers such a vessel at anchor and he is positive that its appearance coincides with that one with which they raced upon the Red sea.

The courier is dispatched to make cautious inquiries, and upon his return ratifies Gordon's suspicions.

Long and eagerly Jack gazes at the vessel in the hope of seeing the face he adores. Sailor men are at work on her deck but there is no sign of petticoats.

Then up comes Antonio having again been dispatched to make further inquiries.

What he now has to impart is to the effect that a party of two ladies and as many gentlemen, together with a limited amount of luggage, left the steam yacht in a gondola a short time before.

Gordon is provoked.

He feels he has lost an opportunity, and yet with such a man as Antonio, who knows every inch of

Venice, they need not long lack the chance to learn where those they seek have gone.

Not desiring to make any further move in the game without the knowledge and sanction of the veteran, in whose good judgment he has great faith, Jack bids Antonio strike for the Merceria.

The great clock of the Torre dell Orologia is just booming the hour of eight when they arrive at the hostelry, which, besides being a house of lodgings, boasts a restaurant almost as well managed as the Caffe Quadri, or even Florians.

No Sir Roderic is in sight, and they are just making inquiries of an attendant, when Chauncey discovers the object of their solicitude leaving a gondola at the water entrance of the hotel.

Jack has learned enough of the veteran's habits to know this is not without its meaning.

"The yacht is here—arrived almost at the same time as ourselves," he exclaims, upon which Sir Roderic smiles grimly.

"Ah! yes, my dear boy."

"You have no need to be told?"

"Well I have been escorting the party to their residence though keeping very close myself."

Jack and young Greene exchange glances.

"Ah! by Jove, now, it is weally better to be bawn

lucky than wich, don'tcherknow," remarks the little swell, resignedly.

"Tell us about it, Sir Roderic," cries Jack deeply anxious concerning Hildegarde.

And the little adventure is speedily in their possession.

"Tell me, did she look deeply anxious—has she changed any?" asks Gordon impulsively as though there can be only one "she" on earth.

"Yes, indeed, twenty years—well now upon my honor I could hardly say. As far as I can remember she appeared very much as usual, with a delightful color and sparkling eyes."

Sir Roderic has caught himself in time for he was just on the point of giving his secret away—that his old passion has been revived.

Although reassured by what he says Jack eyes the old bachelor rather curiously, as though possibly puzzled by his manner.

They have their work cut out before them and the time is limited.

Jack figures it out at three days, and during this interim they must accomplish wonders.

It is thought best to take Anonio into the game, since he may be of vast importance to the carrying out of their plans.

The soldier manipulates matters and by a judicious expenditure of coin, together with a vivid description of the barriers that have arisen in the course of true love, he succeeds in arousing that romantic sympathy which is a part of every warm-hearted Italian nature.

So Antonio has called upon all the saints in the calendar to witness his devotion to the cause of the Anglis signors and they have to rest content at that—knowing the proof of the pudding lies in the eating, and when the time for action arrives they will have a bountiful opportunity to discover the result.

There is plenty to be done. Of course the count's castle must be kept under strict surveillance every hour of the day and night so that should there be any change in Colonel Monks' plans, those in whom they have so decided an interest may not slip away from the grim palace on the Grand Canal without some knowledge of the fact.

At noon Jack and Sir Roderic talk it over in the Caffe Quadri, where they have dropped in to dine, since every visitor to Venice desires to say he has eaten under this historic roof that once sheltered Hawthorne.

Chauncey has gone to see what chance there may be of his launch arriving on the next steamer from

Alexandria, for the captain of the liner bringing it from Zanzibar faithfully promised to push it along.

"There is one thing I fear more than any other," remarks Jack, gloomily, for a man can not appear light hearted under such conditions as envelop his affairs just now, with the girl who has enthralled his heart in danger of being made the wife of a man to whom she is certainly indifferent, even if actual dislike does not mark her feelings toward the count.

"What may that be?" asks the soldier eying his companion closely.

"Suppose Monks learns we are here—he will take the alarm and in spite of us they may all steam away on the yacht, bound for Algiers or some other port unknown to us. Why, they may even take a padre aboard and have the mockery of a marriage performed *en route.*"

He grinds his teeth at the bare thought, but Sir Roderic, partly because of a more jovial disposition and again on account of the woman he loves not being in danger of finding herself made a wife against her will, affects to laugh at the idea.

"That is easily remedied, my boy, just have the yacht blown up with a torpedo," he gaily sings out *sotto voce.*

Jack, however, does brighten up.

"Your joking has put an idea into my head. Listen. It may be possible to disable the boat so that the count will not be in a condition to use her for a week."

"Eureka! that's a great thought, my boy; you will make a success in Parliament yet and you shall stand in my borough one of these days. Follow up that line, only be very careful not to go too far. I'm not too much infatuated with Venetian blue laws."

"And you will take charge of our operations at the castle?"

"Rely on me my boy."

Jack, still filled with his notion, starts upon the fulfillment of it without delay.

First of all he seeks Antonio's assistance and when the astute courier is through with him the young Englishman's friends would pass him in the street without notice, save perhaps to draw further away.

Indeed he passes within three feet of Chauncey, as the latter is sauntering along a narrow street where one could almost touch either wall by extending his arms, and the American swell looks him squarely in the face without recognition.

Jack considers this a remarkably good test.

To change a face in which color was a prominent trait, and make it olive tinted and rather sinister—

to darken a blonde mustache and hair—these are the chief results of Antonio's labor, and when Jack sees the astonishing result in a glass he is horrified at the dark-browed fellow who stares at him so boldly.

Appearances go for a good deal and he confesses that he should be loth to meet such a chap in a lonely street after nightfall.

He has dressed himself in dark blue garments, and has something of the naval officer in his make-up.

His lack of knowledge of the Italian language promises a serious obstruction to his plans in Jack's eyes—true, he has a smattering of the tongue, which Antonio coaches, and the shrewd cicerone can be trusted to so regulate matters that he will not be compelled to betray himself through his manner of speech.

All being arranged they proceed once more to the quay and Antonio engages a boatman to take them out to where the steam yacht is anchored, a thing of beauty and a joy forever, her brass and copper fittings gleaming in the early September sun, her striped awnings fluttering in the soft breeze that blows over the harbor from the Lido where bathers galore disport themselves and from whence, on this same zephyr, is borne the sound of much merriment together with the discord of various musical instru-

ments—for here is the amusement beach of the happy-go-lucky Venetians, second only to a Brighton or a Coney Island.

Jack assumes a very austere air as though vested with tremendous authority—indeed, even to look at his set countenance must warn one not to be familiar. At the same time he gives an occasional tremendous hoarse cough, showing the presence of an exceedingly bad cold which has played havoc with his voice. That is where Antonio's fine Italian hand is seen upon the wall—since his signor can not speak without figuratively giving the game away he has so arranged it that he will not have to talk at all, save to whisper in his attendant's ear.

A neat little trick indeed. Boldly played it is not likely to arouse the least suspicion and may lead to great results.

And presently their stout boatman has put them alongside the steam yacht of the count.

CHAPTER XXVI

ON BOARD THE STEAM YACHT

A gruff voice hails them from on deck, of course Italian.

Antonio proceeds to make reply, and a colloquial duel ensues; but it might be noticed that while Antonio's manner grows more determined that of the officer seems to become obsequious.

Evidently what the cicerone is giving him has already made an effect.

Meanwhile Jack, seated in the stern-sheets, is surveying the yacht with a critical eye.

He remembers that Hildegarde has made her home on board this floating palace for days, and perhaps in his survey of the craft in his official character he may be even permitted to look upon the charming little state-room which has been hallowed by her occupancy.

At the same time he does not forget the particular business that brought him to the pleasure craft.

Antonio has at last thoroughly convinced the officer with regard to their mission.

Turning to his employer he speaks in a respectful manner, and Jack, posted by his significant gestures, knows they are to go on board.

The officer receives them with genuine Italian courtesy, but in reply to his salutation Jack simply smiles, bows, and pointing to his throat shakes his head, after which he gives a graveyard cough.

Such colds are not so common in sunny Italy but that they excite commiseration and Antonio has already so arranged matters that all the talking will be on one side.

Jack comes aboard as an inspector in the employ of the government to look over the yacht and report on her condition.

Such a man is always received with respect.

He makes an exhaustive examination above and below decks. Sometimes the officer is with them and again he quits their company to see about his own business.

Jack has made one discovery.

While in the engineer's room they find a man in a greasy check jumper and overalls, oiling the machinery.

This is the engineer's assistant and Jack needs no

second glance at his face to learn his nationality—he is an Irishman, one of those roving souls to be found in almost every country under the sun, for wherever adventure and a chance to make a fortune exist, there sons of the Emerald Isle migrate.

At once Jack decides that this is his heaven-sent opportunity.

What he wants is a chance to talk with this fellow even if only for five minutes.

So he examines the machinery and loiters about until the chief officer has one of his periodical spasms that chain him to duty, and excuses himself.

No sooner is he gone than Jack advances to the side of the greasy oiler.

"My man what may your name be?" he asks, and the fellow, who has been secretly amused with the pantomime by means of which communications were carried on between the government officer and the others, almost feels a stroke of paralysis sweep over him at being addressed by the man who could not speak above a whisper and addressed in plain English too.

"Shandy O'Moore, plaze your honor," falls almost involuntarily from his lips.

"Good. I like that name and I can see that you are an honest fellow, deserving a better berth than

second engineer on board the yacht of an Italian. I am going to put you in the way of climbing up the ladder."

"Indade, sor, you are mighty kind, and nothing could plaze me more, I'm thinking."

The Irishman, with the proverbial quickness of his race, has already recovered from his astonishment and is beginning to grope about for a solution of the mystery.

Time is very precious. At any instant the yacht's first officer may return, when all opportunity for conversation must be lost.

Antonio with rare prudence has taken up his position where he can see when an interruption is about to occur and signal to his employer by means of a cough.

So Jack plunges in.

He knows the character of the man with whom he has to deal. It is always best to be very frank with an Irishman—they have warm hearts and their sympathy is readily aroused. Knowing this Jack in a graphic but hasty manner sketches the outlines of the case and tells how fate, aided and abetted by Colonel Monks and the count, is endeavoring to steal from him his own.

Shandy O'Moore may have a sweetheart of his

own far away—be that as it might he experiences the keenest interest in the little hurried narrative Jack rattles through.

No doubt the romantic interest of the affair and Jack's boldness in coming aboard, appeal to his spirit of chivalry.

"And I want you to help me win my sweetheart—to save her from this cruel fate," is what Jack uses as a clincher.

"I'll do it, sor—I'll do it, no matter what the consequences are," comes the reply, with so earnest an expression that Jack seizes the hand the oiler has wiped dry on his jumper, and squeezes it.

"Then you must meet me ashore to talk it over. We would be disturbed here. When can you get shore leave, my friend?"

"I'm off at six to-night."

"Do you know Venice?"

"Like a book, your honor. I've spint some years of my life as a Venetian from Cork."

"Good. Then at seven this evening, meet me in the Piazzo San Marco, in front of the Clock Tower."

Antonio has given a cough to signify that the interview must cease, so Shandy O'Moore, the Irish rolling stone, nods his head to denote his appreciation of the agreement and falls to his labor whistling

softly some ditty popular at the day in the London music halls and consequently carried around the earth.

Of course Jack has accomplished what he set out to do and may return to the quay with considerable satisfaction, but he desires above all things not to arouse any suspicion in the mind of the officer. So he carries out his role to perfection and several times, to all appearances, comes perilously near bursting a blood vessel in the attempt to break into speech, on each occasion relieving himself by whispering in the ear of his henchman, who invents some very plausible and complimentary address, upon receipt of which the flattered first officer is constrained to clap his hand on his breast and bow repeteadly.

Oh! these Italians have no superiors in diplomacy and Antonio should undoubtedly have been in a position to serve his king and country as a prime minister, for he is a Crispi, a Bismarck and a Rudini all in one.

So Jack Gordon beats a dignified retreat from the count's yacht.

As his boat moves off he returns the salute of the pleased first officer.

On the way to the quay they meet a boat which

contains no less a personage than the owner of the yacht. Jack surveys the count closely, confident that the other can have no suspicion of his identity beneath his disguise.

The other even salutes him, believing him to be some officer of the port, and Jack returns the courtesy with the utmost gravity, even while he grits his teeth at the sight of his determined rival, who seems bent upon stealing away his sweetheart.

Well, the game is only part played and Jack believes he knows more about his enemies' hand than they do his.

He hunts for the others to tell them what luck has drifted in his way.

They are not at the hotel and having nothing better to do, Jack, having resumed his natural appearance, starts out for a little exploration, with Antonio as his companion.

Part of the time they walk, and again take a gondola—along the Grand Canal and through some of its devious branches—under the famous Rialto, and even to the plaza of St. Marks.

All these and more Jack sees while killing time, but his thoughts are almost constantly upon the subject that has occupied his mind sleeping or waking for months and which has been the magnet drawing

him all the long way from Zanzibar to Venice—Hildegarde!

Somehow he is jealous—yet chides himself for being so He can not forget that Sir Roderic said she looked as sparkling and bright as ever. Under the circumstances he would have thought she might have shown signs of mental distress—of sleepless nights and deep anxiety.

Does she long to see him—is she as loyal as he has proven?

Jack's better nature fights these things down again and again, but they will crop up to give him uneasiness; for the count is a distinguished looking man, rich and of high degree, and women have proven fickle before now—there is Sir Roderic, he felt sure some treachery on the part of a sweetheart in the dim past had helped to make him a roamer, and almost a scoffer at conjugal happiness.

Altogether our Jack is not feeling as happy as he might and let Antonio grow as enthusiastic as he please over the bronze lions or the marble piles of masonry the young Briton hears but vaguely.

Finally however as the shadows lengthen and the heat of the day is tempered by a cooling zephyr from off the sea he pulls himself together.

This will not do.

He must dispel these base suspicions and act as he has done in the past, believing that Hildegarde awaits his coming, that she prays for his success, and against this combination what can hold out?

Again the gondola is turned in the direction of the hotel which fronts on the Merceria and has a water entrance besides.

This time he finds the others in.

On their part they have been searching for Jack much more eagerly than he has for them, and when just on the point of sending out the town-crier, as Chauncey declares, discover him approaching.

Of course they are eager to hear of his success, and the story is speedily told, causing broad smiles to radiantly appear upon the faces of those whose luck did not allow them to enter the game.

Antonio is congratulated on his diplomacy, and shows his white teeth in a happy smile, for it pleases him to serve these bold Anglo-Saxons, since Italy and England have ever been good friends—and besides they are free with the ducats.

CHAPTER XXXII

A RENDEZVOUS IN THE SHADOW OF THE CAMPANILE

Sir Roderic has something to report.

He deliberately takes out his wallet, opens it, selects a piece of paper and hands it to Jack.

"What d'ye think of that, my boy?" he asks, while Chauncey, who is in the hunt, looks on with eager, sparkling eyes.

Of course Jack opens the missive wonderingly, and then utters an exclamation.

It is a note, and from Hildegarde, short and pithy, but of tremendous buoyancy to poor Jack who has been wrestling with the demon of jealousy ever since he looked upon the count at short range, and discovered how dashing a chap he proved to be.

"Dear Jack—Something told me you were here in the same city as myself. Do find some means to take me away from Uncle—I fear him more every day,

and unless relief comes soon my will can not hold out against his. Much as I dislike the count, I must say that thus far he has acted like a perfect gentleman, but for God's sake come soon, dear Jack.

"Your

"HILDEGARDE."

Not a bad little *billet doux* for an ardent lover to receive, and regardless of the curious eyes upon him Jack presses the paper to his lips—since it has been in her beloved hands it is holy to him.

Only one thing gives him a momentary stab, for the green-eyed monster releases his hold upon a heart with extreme reluctance. This is in relation to the sentence concerning the count. The Italian has made a good impression on her by proving himself a gentleman—who can say what might not come of such a feeling when nurtured by the iron will of the master hypnotizer?

"Perfect gentleman, eh—it's a point in his favor, and I shall be inclined to let him down a little more easily. Have you seen what she writes, Sir Roderic?" he asks.

"Yes it was not sealed and while we disliked to read, still there might be necessity for prompt action and we had to swallow our scruples, you see."

"But you haven't told me where you got it, and I am curious to know."

"You can thank Antonio for that."

"What! he was with me."

"That is true but his influence brought it about. The man he secured to watch the palace has turned out a trump."

Antonio smiles with grim pleasure—ah! in imagination he can almost hear the sweet jingle of the golden boys that will presently be tumbling over each other in their eagerness to find lodgings in his pockets. It is a delightful thing to gain the good will of such generous patrons.

"It appears that he was once in the employ of the count and is well acquainted not only with the interior of the palazzo but also the servants employed there.

"In truth, among the domestics he has a flame who would do much for him, one Paula and who, waiting upon your Hildegarde, has come to take a great fancy to her.

"Perhaps Rinaldo should have been more discreet, for a mistake would have ruined all our plans; but undoubtedly he bound the girl to secrecy, and told her about you.

"Of course she repeated it to Hildegarde and the result has been this little *billet doux*."

"Then we have an accomplice right in the palace. That may serve us well. Tell Rinaldo I am under obligations to him and give him this with my compliments, Antonio."

Ah! already the golden stream has begun to flow, and Antonio can be trusted to see that a sufficiency of the yellow metal comes his way.

There is time for them to enjoy a meal together before Jack starts out to keep his tryst with the Irish engineer.

The situation is canvassed carefully and not even the smallest point overlooked, for often success or failure hinges upon what might have appeared a trivial thing.

Chauncey regrets the absence of his launch, which might serve them to good purpose in conducting their game; but he entertains high hopes of its arrival on the morrow and that he will be afloat in his own craft ere another night closes in.

Jack consults his watch many times, which shows that he is growing nervous and Chauncey jokingly declares one might easily believe his appointment was with a maiden fair instead of a Celtic engineer.

When Jack asks for company the veteran remarks that as he has something else cut out to fill in his time, Greene will do.

So the two start for the rendezvous, one of the best known localities in all Venice and the scene of many a weird panorama could the scroll of the past be unrolled.

Suppose O'Moore should play them false—he has it in his power to ruin all their plans, and yet Jack does not concern himself to any great extent about this for he takes pride in his ability to read character and the Irishman's face was one stamped with sincerity and honesty.

When they reach their destination it lacks just a few minutes of the time agreed upon for the meeting, and of course the engineer has not yet shown up.

The evening is pleasant for September.

The world-famed Piazzo San Marco is of an oblong form some six hundred feet one way by half as much the other.

As it is the only large open space in all Venice it is a famous promenade and frequently masquerade parties and festivals are held here.

On one side the walls of the old palace of the doges rear themselves; on the other side is the mint and public buildings.

Public executions formerly took place between the two granite columns, so that to this day one

has a sensation of awe, as though the foot presses holy ground.

At one end of the square stands the cathedral of St. Mark, the Torre dell Orologia or Clock Tower, and the Campanile or Bell Tower, where at intervals a watchman strikes the metal that hangs some three hundred feet in air.

At two o'clock every day, just as the great clock strikes the hour, thousands of pigeons flock to the square to be fed, provision having been made for their maintenance by some tender-hearted philanthropist.

It is to this promenade Jack and his friend betake themselves.

The square is anything but deserted when they arrive, but having glanced at everyone in the vicinity of the Clock Tower, Jack is fain to believe his man has not yet shown up.

But he will be there—no one could doubt that after a single look at Shandy O'Moore's resolute countenance—it belongs to a man who does not allow trifles to stand in the way when he has determined upon his plan.

The picture is charming in the soft gloaming—few lights have as yet dared make their appearance. Some pigeons coo upon the housetops—a sweet sound

of sacred music steals from the sacristy of St. Marks, people walk hither and yon, in twos or in squads, friends or it may be lovers, for the Piazza is a famous place for such gentle folks, and could the cold stones of the doge's palace frame in words all the remarkable sights they have looked upon in the centuries that have flown, the story would not be entirely made up of turmoil and bloodshed, for thousands of times has Romeo wooed Juliet under the shadow of Campanile and Clock Tower.

Ah! at last.

The great clock is striking the hour with its sonorous gong.

It is time.

Turning to look toward the piazzetta, which leads to the grand square from the sea, Jack sees his man. Only the quickness of his eye enables him to discover that it is Shandy O'Moore, for the transformation has been complete, and instead of the oily engineer, behold, quite a swell who falls but little behind Chauncey himself when it comes to genuine swagger, though his is of a lower order than that of the only Greene.

The man brushes Jack in passing and never dreams of his identity until the other mentions his name; for Jack disguished as a dark-visaged Italian port official

and Jack sailing under his own colors are quite two different beings.

It is plain to be seen however, from his manner, that the alteration is highly satisfactory to Shandy, for like most of his race the Irishman, frank and cheery himself, likes to find the same attributes in others.

As the time is more propitious, Jack takes the opportunity to relate much of his history to this worthy son of St. Patrick—for he is about to ask him to do a risky piece of business, and believes the other should be thoroughly posted before plunging into it.

Shandy is undoubtedly charmed by what he hears. Men of his nature can admire boldness, even as they despise cowardice. Therefore, he is attracted by the simple narrative of how Jack Gordon has been baffled by fate in his affair of the heart.

He readily tells what little he knows of the young girl's presence on board, but Jack is thrilled to hear that on one occasion, the engineer coming up at night for a breath of air, saw Hildegarde wiping her eyes covertly as though she had been weeping, and distinctly heard her murmur the words:

"Oh! my Jack, where are you at this hour?"

Imagine the sensations of the lover upon hearing

how she thought of him when alone, — and when the engineer tells of this incident he only knows the other as Mr. Gordon.

Then Jack comes down to business and explains what he has reason to fear with reference to the count and his party eluding him by making off on the steam-yacht.

Shandy O'Moore catches on to his meaning.

"I say now where I can serve you, sor. It's a little fine work ye're afther wantin' done on the machinery of the boat. Sure, it goes agin me heart to disable her, for the nate thrick has quite taken me heart by storm; but sor, don't let that give ye any cause for worry. Ye have me word that if they fetch the young gurl aboord again and start to quit Venice, something is bound to break down—can't help doing it — long overdue, you know."

His manner is so bland that Jack is quite captured —as for Chauncey, he is studying the airs of this "swell" of a different breed with something of dismay; for Shandy in his shore togs is a sight to bring down the house, and to electrify the gods.

Nevertheless, his heart is on the square, and Jack has the most implicit trust in him.

So it is all arranged, and if the O'Moore can manage, by hook or crook, the count's yacht will not be

in a condition to take his party to Algiers or Nice or any other resort.

The battle must be fought to a finish under Venetian skies

CHAPTER XXVIII

JACK CALLS "TIME"

The day has been well spent, and they can count on having made progress.

With a confederate on board the yacht, and one in the palace of the count, surely they are in a condition to accomplish something.

Jack's last act before retiring is to gaze once more upon the note which came from Hildegarde, and which is the source of both keen pleasure and uneasiness.

Another dawn. Gordon is up and about early enough. He has figured as closely as possible in the matter, and knows their time is short—it may be this very day or the morrow on which Hildegarde comes of age, and when the strange power of her guardian will be exerted in order to carry out his plans. Which uncertainty does not add to Jack's comfort.

Sir Roderic finds him pacing up and down the loggia of the hotel like a caged lion, and appreciating the condition of his mind he takes him in hand. Under the wise treatment of the soldier Jack recovers his spirits, throwing aside the feeling of early morning depression which makes everything appear so dismal and blue.

When Chauncey joins them later they actually make merry.

The little swell has good news. His boat is on hand. Really, the captain of the liner at Alexandria deserves great credit, and it must have been a bit of rare good luck that allowed him to transfer the naphtha launch from his own deck to that of a steamer just starting for the Adriatic sea.

Chauncey has his work for the morning cut out, and promises to be at their service when noon comes. That little launch may yet come in very handy—who knows.

The others seek Rinaldo to ascertain what the prospect may be at the palace.

He is found at his post where the castle of the Rubinis is under his observation, while at the same time his presence is not apt to create suspicion.

Rinaldo sits with a rude fish-pole in his hands, and seeks to lure the finny denizens of the Grand

Canal out of their element. It is a most delightful occupation for a patient man, with a task upon his hands that necessitates the passage of time.

Rinaldo has already been in the palace this morning, early though the hour is—love laughs at time and conventionalities, and Rinaldo has a sweetheart within those adamantine walls.

Paula, eager to propitiate her old lover, whom she feared was quite lost to her, has shown herself quick to discover all that is going on. She does not deem it beneath her dignity to prowl around and listen at half-closed doors in order to learn what there may be in the wind with relation to Colonel Monks' plans.

There is nothing startling in her report; that is, our friends have already anticipated its principal feature, to wit: that the time is at hand for Monks to arouse his dormant faculties, exert his strange, devilish power to the utmost, and cause Hildegarde to consent that she become the Countess Rubini.

What they desire to positively know is the question of time.

When will this occur?

At least they seem to have another night in which to plan and work.

Sir Roderic is a desperate fighter, and from a military standpoint knows how to conduct a campaign in the most scientific manner; but when it comes to making an assault on the heart of a woman, he is bound to confess himself a bungler and an amateur.

Thus he does not quite find himself at home in managing this game, simply because there are petticoats concerned in it, and those memories of the past quite unsettle him.

Jack has written a note to Hildegarde, and Rinaldo gives his word that it shall be in the hands of the young signorina within an hour.

When the ogres have left the palace he will slip in to see Paula, and the rest is easy. There will be an answer which he is to bring away with him.

So noon comes.

At dinner, Chauncey is enthusiastic over his boat, which he has in fine trim. He announces the craft already provisioned for a week's trip, and suggests that if the ladies can only be smuggled aboard, the whole party may run down the Adriatic, and cross to Algiers, where means can be found to consummate a certain little matter that will put temptation forever out of the count's way, at least so far as Hildegarde is concerned.

All of which pleases one Jack Gordon more than words can describe, since such a consummation has been his dream for many months, giving him hope to battle against the billows of the China sea, to bear up while a prisoner in a Zanzibar dungeon, and under the most adverse circumstances.

Perhaps Sir Roderic may be dubious about the propriety of trusting themselves in a mosquito yacht upon such a body of water as the Mediterranean; but he has seen how gallantly the launch weathered the wind storm off the coast of Africa, and should the emergency demand it, might be willing to accept even such risks in order to win the game.

During the afternoon, having nothing better to do, they go for a trip with the Yankee skipper; and leaving the romance attached to the gondola aside, one and all declare that the sensation of swiftness in moving to and fro is a great desideratum.

One of their designs is to learn the shortest route in case they are compelled to leave the island city in a great hurry.

Thus their afternoon is not all wasted, since they have learned that which may yet save the day for them.

When passing near the steam yacht of the count

they have kept under cover, so that should their enemies be aboard, which is quite likely, they will not have their suspicions aroused.

It is a game of cross purposes, and every artifice that can be used to blind those on the opposite side is legitimate.

Such launches are frequently seen in Venetian waters, though usually they are the smaller ones used as tenders on board American yachts.

This being the case, the passage of one can not arouse curiosity, even though it causes Monks to remember the small craft that played such havoc among the slave dhows, when he was escaping to the mainland, after Said Khalid's defeat at Zanzibar.

Thinking discretion the better part, Chauncey and his friends have housed the little brass "terror" with which the man of war had created such consternation among the covey of slavers.

The day draws near its close.

They have talked their plans over and over again a dozen times, and after many changes, finally settle upon what seems to be the best method of accomplishing their purpose.

Of course their object is simply an abduction, if such it can be called, when the parties to be kidnapped are more than willing.

Chauncey alludes to it as an elopement, and makes several remarks in connection with the singular freaks of that sprite Cupid, that cause the old bachelor to appear confused.

Poor Sir Roderic is in a peculiar state of mind. He had imagined himself well cured of the follies so natural to youth—that during the two decades which have passed since he was so unceremoniously jilted by *his* Hildegarde his heart had lost all interest in the gentler half of creation.

That glimpse of the woman, and his remembrance of what her daughter had said has changed all this. Sir Roderic wrestles with a sensation as novel as it is alarming to one of his age.

Cupid has gone and done it—actually fired one of his burning darts through the old bachelor's throbbing heart, and the old feeling for his early love has been revived.

She regrets her cruel act—she was deceived by the man who won her—she has suffered, and mayhap has loved him through all these years.

Well, stranger things have happened than that a man of his age should conclude to give up roaming and settle down to a peaceful life. After the storm comes a calm.

Rinaldo has not sent word, but Jack is in hopes the

man may have a note for him from the fair captive.

So he charters a gondola and takes a spin in that quarter.

As for Sir Roderic and Chauncey, to pass the time away they have gone to the Grand Canal in the launch, to witness a gondola race, which affords much amusement on account of the various mishaps that occur.

There is some difficulty in picking a way through the vast concourse of boats of every description, but Chauncey slows down and Antonio has taken to the wheel with remarkable dexterity, so that in the end they leave the Grand Canal and plunge into the smaller tributary that condescends to lap the stones of the rear entrance to the Merceria hotel. And as they sight the rendezvous they discover a figure on the flagging that makes extravagant gestures—a figure Sir Roderic declares to be Jack, and Chauncey, after adjusting his monocle after his deliberate fashion, agrees with him.

"He beckons as though he would have us fly—something must be wrong—something has surely happened," exclaims the veteran, showing not a little alarm, so quickly does the presence of that arrow in the heart undo the philosophical calmness of years.

Chauncey is not concerned in the same way, and hence, shows more deliberation.

"By Jove! I do believe what you say is actually twue. The deah boy does appeah to be anxious for our awival; but as we are now almost there, I should not dare put on additional powah. Ahoy! Jack, stand by to take the paintah, that's a good fellah."

They sweep up to the landing in good style, and Chauncey manipulates the propeller with such skill that an egg would hardly be crushed between the boat and the stones.

Jack throws the rope over a painted post.

"Stop! don't come ashore. I will join you in the cabin of the launch," he explains.

Then the others know he has heard news, indeed, and that there is a method in his apparently strange actions.

He joins them under the canopy, eager and flushed.

"Well," he remarks, soberly, "the time has come."

"You mean—" begins Sir Roderic, slowly.

"That it has been all arranged, and to-night Count Rubini is to marry the girl who belongs to me alone, and whom I have sworn he shall never possess save over Jack Gordon's dead body. Our work begins *now*."

CHAPTER XXIX

YOUNG LOCHINVAR IN A GONDOLA

Sir Roderic is himself again.

He thrusts out his hand, while his ruddy face glows in the glorious light that comes from the west and tells of a dying sun.

"Well, you know we are here, and our one object in life is to help you. Whatever mortal effort can do, that we stand ready to accomplish. Make your mind easy, Jack—we shall win out, never fear."

Such inspiring words, accompanied by the quiet assurance of his manner, give this anxious lover a new lease of life, and he proves his appreciation by the vigorous squeeze he bestows upon the soldier's digits.

"Now spin the yarn—you have had another note from Golden Locks, I suppose?" for by such a title has he designated Hildegarde.

"Yes—Rinaldo had it for me. I was foolish not

to have gone before. Such delay might bring ruination on the game."

"Spare yourself. No use crying over spilt milk, you know. The thing is to remedy it without further delay. The letter, Jack,—read it to us."

He catches some of the veteran's enthusiasm and as there is still plenty of light by means of which to decipher the few lines Hildegarde has sent, Jack reads:

"Dear Jack: Your note, while so guarded in its expressions, has given me new hope. Believe that I love only you, and nothing can change my feelings. Nevertheless, you know the strange power my uncle possesses over my will. I can not explain it—I only know that in his presence there always seems to be a conflict going on within me, and that it usually ends in the complete subjugation of my own faculties. To-day is my birthday, and I fear the worst, since from certain hints he has dropped I am sure they mean to influence me into this hated marriage to-night. I could never love the count—I look forward to a union with him in deadly fear, yet am I powerless to prevent it, being a prisoner in this gloomy castle. My only hope rests with you. Should that fail, God help me. Therefore, come to me, my own Jack. Your forlorn

"HILDEGARDE."

Sir Roderic's eyes flash at the reading of this cry for succor—such an appeal even from a stranger would take him over desert and mountain to the assistance of a soul in distress.

"Never fear, my boy, we will rescue her from their clutches—I swear it."

Such words from a man of his calibre mean much, and Gordon upon hearing them takes fresh courage immediately.

The campaign must be speedily inaugurated, and success attained through the push and pluck so natural to their Anglo-Saxon blood.

Luckily the details have been so well arranged beforehand that in this crisis but little remains to be done.

They visit their rooms, secure their small amount of luggage, settle their account at the hotel, and board the launch, which is to be their home for the present.

Antonio still remains, for they may yet have good use for him, since his knowledge of the Adriatic may enable them to evade any pursuit on the part of their foes in the steam yacht, should the ally on board fail to accomplish his part of the game.

Thus they move away.

The Grand Canal is their destination, and pres-

ently the wonderful palaces that line its sides loom up to the right and left.

Sir Roderic would much rather have darkness in which to carry out his plans, but the fates will otherwise, and a silver crescent, hanging in the western sky, sheds a delicate sheen over the magnificent sheet of water which has long been a favorite theme for poets and painters the world over.

There is a balmy feeling in the air that must be experienced to be appreciated, while upon the ear, instead of the bustle and racket incident to life in our modern Babylons, London and New York, come a variety of sounds so soft and pleasing that they soothe rather than irritate.

Musical instruments tinkle in many places, and the song of the serenader has already commenced with the coming of evening's shades, the merry laugh of the gondoliers, their quaint salutations, and the faint "chug-chug" of the little magic launch mingle with the gurgle and splash of water.

Surrounded by such romantic sights and sounds, it would be strange if the members of our little expedition did not find themselves partaking in a measure of the electricity that seems to be in the ozone.

They move gently along the water route in the

direction of the Rubini palace, and converse in low tones while awaiting the arrival of the launch at the point where the spy Rinaldo may be found, no longer fishing, but on the watch all the same.

Of course the soldier is reminded of another night just like this, and he can not resist the temptation to tell them all about it.

In old Madrid was where the adventure befel him. He had been in the Spanish capital during carnival time, and having a healthy curiosity concerning the many strange sights to be run across at such a period, had roamed the streets at night, witnessing the *gitano* or gypsy dance, and finally that truly Spanish gyration termed the *bolero*, as performed by a dark-eyed houri, together with a young senor.

The *bolero* dancer had cast her kerchief in his lap as a mark of favor, he being expected to tie a gold piece within the dainty, highly-scented web, and toss it back while she rested.

Very good—Sir Roderic when in Rome always suits himself to circumstances, and his gift to the dancer on this occasion was a British sovereign.

Perhaps she smiled too sweetly on him, or else the little chat she indulged in with the soldier aroused the jealousy of some lover.

Be that as it might, on the way home, Sir Roderic was waylaid in a dark *casa*, and had quite a lively little encounter with a couple of Spanish bravos who seemed bent upon terminating all his earthly pains. Of course he ran them off after a hot little affair, and leaving Madrid on the following day, nothing further came of the adventure.

It is the position of the moon, the sound of music throbbing upon the air, and the odor of blossoms and flowers greeting the senses that arouse this memory of old Madrid.

Many fairy craft ply the waters of the Grand Canal on a night like this, most of them carrying colored lanterns, so that the scene is indeed a picturesque one.

Truly these people of Venice believe in securing all the pleasure in life that can be squeezed out of it within the space of each twenty-four hours.

One never suffers with *ennui* while within the hospitable borders of the island city.

"We now come to Rinaldo," remarks the cicerone presently, as the launch creeps toward what appears to be a landing connected with a deserted antique pile of masonry, once doubtless a magnificent palace.

Rinaldo already knows the little boat, and is on

the lookout for them, since Jack has given him warning that they will presently turn up, bent upon desperate work.

He has enlisted for the campaign, and means to see it through. These Venetians will do much either for money, or a genuine regard toward the person they serve.

Before they can settle upon the plan to be carried out they must hear what Rinaldo has to say. He has the lay of the land in his grasp, not having been a servant in the Rubini employ for years for nothing.

In his patois he endeavors to give them a rough description of the palace which had been occupied by the count's ancestors centuries back, when yearly the doge of Venice and his suite were compelled by statute to carry out the ancient decree of espousing the Adriatic. This remarkable ceremony of dropping a ring into the sea, in the presence of a vast concourse of courtiers in gondolas, the doge being carried in state in his bucentaur or barge, was continued until the downfall of the republic in 1797, when the French army destroyed the barge and Ascension day now passes without the "wedding of the waters."

Acting on the advice of Rinaldo the launch is secreted in the shadow of a building some little

distance away, and Chauncey finds himself deputed to remain on board. Much against his will he consents, for it has been his hope to have a hand in the stirring scene likely to take place within the palace when the rescue occurs.

Nevertheless Greene is sensible, and realizes that much of the success attending their sacred mission may depend upon him.

He is the only one able to keep the launch in trim for immediate flight, and it is really essential that they should guard the boat, since their plans must be nipped in the bud should some daring thieves steal the craft while all hands were absent.

Thus the little swell makes a virtue of necessity, and swallowing his disappointment endeavors to go about his business cheerfully.

He secretly begs Jack to recollect the spirited story of Young Lochinvar, and to profit by the dashing manner in which that lover carried his bride away from the altar; and although the case is hardly analogous, there being no horses in Venice, Jack solemnly promises to take advantage of the lesson.

All being ready, they leave Chauncey and the launch, Rinaldo having secured a gondola with a cabin, which will answer their purpose admirably.

CHAPTER XXX

AN INVASION OF THE PALACE

The affair which Jack and his soldier comrade have undertaken is not child's play, and no one realizes its gravity better than Sir Roderic.

Perhaps familiarity with danger may breed a contempt for its terrors; but he has always thrown heart and soul into whatever work might engage his attention, regardless of past experiences.

Thus he enters upon this affair with all his senses on the alert, knowing what a momentous matter it is to Jack.

Besides, he counts the forces against them.

The Rubini might be an ordinary man at Zanzibar in spite of his ownership of a magnificent steam yacht such as no other Italian could claim; but in Venice he is undoubtedly a power, and his palace a veritable castle.

Therefore, when a couple of foreigners plan to

enter that lordly pile, and elope with the bride to whom Count Rubini is about to unite himself with the consent of her guardian, they undertake a task that might have staggered Hercules himself after he had completed his famous labors.

All the same they show no signs of shrinking from the ordeal, and when men possess the nerve to try they generally succeed.

Besides, it could not be expected that the man who would defy the great mahdi of the Soudan when in his power after Gordon's death at Khartoum, would shrink from encountering a petty prince of Venice.

Sir Roderic is made of sterner stuff, and he has a personal interest in the matter, too, since he can not chase from his mind the memories of a past in which the charming widow has a part.

According to his way of thinking it is about time this mysterious bond of hypnotism between Colonel Monks and his relatives were smashed.

They have been influenced to accompany the unscrupulous schemer about long enough, and Sir Roderic has grimly resolved to bring the unholy alliance to an end by heroic measures.

In the gondola then, paddled by the experienced hands of the two guides who no doubt have served

their day upon the waters, they glide toward the Rubini palace.

These craft are in actual use in no other city besides Venice, and the sensation of riding in so fairy-like a boat is an experience never forgotten. They are, through the edict of some ancient ruler, invariably painted black, which fact was not forgotten by the poet Byron when he wrote his celebrated description of the gondola, to be found in "Beppo."

> "'Tis a long, covered boat that's common here,
> Curved at the prow, built lightly, but compactly,
> Rowed by two rowers, each called a gondolier.
> It glides along the water, looking blackly,
> Just like a coffin clapped in a canoe,
> Where none can make out what you say or do.
> And up and down the long canals they go,
> And under the Rialto shoot away,
> By night and day, all paces swift and slow;
> And round the theatres, a sable throng,
> They wait in their dusk livery of woe;
> But not to them do woful things belong,
> For sometimes they contain a deal of fun,
> Like mourning coaches when the funeral's done."

After that, a further description of this remarkable Venetian craft would be superfluous.

No one notices them particularly, for gondolas are as common as pedestrians upon a Parisian boulevard—they advance, they halt, they cross each

other's track and the gondoliers exchange good-natured chaff and badinage.

At the landing float a number of boats. Above tower the walls of the Rubini palace.

Within the entrance lights abound—indeed, the main portion of the structure seems to be illuminated with a prodigality that has not been known for years, and which naturally excites considerable curiosity among those who pass by in boats.

A number of gondolas hover in the vicinity, their occupants doubtless killing time, and curious to know what is going on that the palace should be in such a blaze of glory.

Jack notices this fact.

At first he is rather put out because of it, suspecting that the presence of so many craft may interfere with their escape.

Strangely enough it strikes Sir Roderic in just the opposite way, and he calculates to make the circumstance positively useful should the pursuit be keen.

Rinaldo knows how to manage—Rinaldo has not been connected with the Rubini household for years in the past without knowing all the wrinkles.

There is another entrance to the palace, by means

of which tradesmen who bring their produce, reach the culinary department.

This is through a rather dark arched passage, which ends in a small basin, doubtless very convenient for the cook.

When about half way through this passage, the gondola comes to a halt, and all of its human freight, with the exception of Rinaldo, might be seen in the semi-darkness clambering upon an exceedingly narrow platform on that side against the palace wall.

Here they are to lie as silent as the cold stones upon which they crouch, until Rinaldo has a chance to complete his work of gaining them entrance.

Groping around with his hand Sir Roderic speedily discovers the small door which formerly may have been used as a private means of entry and exit from the palace, but which Rinaldo assures them has not been opened for many years until he poured some oil on rusty hinges, and ponderous lock, effecting his purpose. Which they consider quite smart of Rinaldo, and worthy of commendation.

Jack fumes a little as he lies there so helpless, with time crawling slowly on; but then Jack is an impatient lover, to whom seconds seem hours, since he imagines Hildegarde may be slipping from his arms while he loiters here.

The soldier is more reasonable, remembering the hour is early, and also that Rinaldo must be cautious in his actions lest he arouse the suspicions of the armed retainers within the palace walls.

In good time he will open the little door, and give them entrance.

Patience is one of the things experience brings to a man, and Sir Roderic learned his lesson many years ago.

Twice voices warn them of the approach of other boats, and at such times they hug the little platform upon which they lie with such zealous care, that coupled with the smiles of favoring fortune they are not discovered.

All of them are grateful on this account, for should any of these people find them perched upon that ledge, in all probability there would be the deuce to pay.

Ordinarily such an encounter would be to the liking of the soldier, who lived amid war's alarms; but under the conditions which govern their present circumstances, he would not care to have it occur.

There will in all likelihood be abundant opportunities for that sort of thing before the end of the drama has been reached, even if everything works

well, and their daring plans can be carried to a fairly successful conclusion.

Everything must have a termination, and Jack's agony of mind is relieved at length by hearing some one fumbling with the door. Then comes a creaking sound as the rusty key is turned in the lock.

Rinaldo manages to move the door after a little tussle with obstinate hinges, unused for many years.

At last!

Gordon is the first to enter the palace, and his manner is that of a man who has every nerve stretched to the utmost tension.

Really, it must be a queer sensation that overwhelms him upon realizing that he is actually under the ancestral roof of his hated rival, the count, who aspires to call *his* Hildegarde wife, and who is actually at that moment entertaining friends come to witness his nuptials.

No wonder Jack continually grits his teeth and frowns—no wonder he looks very much like a tiger at bay, his restless orbs glaring first to the right and then to the left, while his hands twitch nervously, opening and closing in a spasmodic way, as though nothing could be so satisfactory to him just then as a chance to close those same fingers once and for all

upon a certain olive-tinted neck which belongs to a member of King Humbert's aristocracy.

Everything now depends upon Rinaldo, who has the swing of the palace, and can lead the invaders to that part where preparations are being made for the wedding.

Even Sir Roderic feels the extreme gravity of the situation, and makes sure his little persuader is in his pocket—the trusty sword having been left behind in the launch, as being unfitted for an expedition requiring the utmost secrecy; for such a weapon, although of tremendous advantage in a *melee*, when handled by an expert, is apt to get between the legs of a creeping man, or by an unexpected jangle against the rocks betray the whole game, so that Sir Roderic, who is up to all these things, has really done wisely in temporarily discarding his blade.

Judging from the many twists and turns they make, the soldier quickly decides that should the fates separate them from Rinaldo at any time their condition will be indeed deplorable, as none of the rest can even give a guess concerning the right road out.

He is himself somewhat surprised to see Antonio stick to their fortunes, knowing as he does what vengeance a powerful nobleman like the Venetian

count may take should he learn the identity of those who served his foes.

Antonio loves gold, and like many of his class will even go so far as to imperil his life in order to make a good haul.

As for Rinaldo, the soldier has a suspicion that he has a deep grievance against Rubini, and eagerly seizes upon the opportunity to wipe out the score.

These Italians are all children of emotion at any rate, easily swayed, whether for good or evil; but devoted heart and soul to that flag under which they may chance to serve.

When things are working in his favor Sir Roderic is not the man to pry too closely into the why and wherefore of facts, content to let good enough alone. Therefore he accepts what the gods give and raises no remonstrance.

Several times Rinaldo's shrewdness has enabled them to escape discovery, for under his directions they dodge into various nooks or rooms when the approach of servants or armed retainers renders their position perilous.

This sort of thing quite agrees with the soldier's idea of an adventure, and he never feels better than when the very atmosphere around seems surcharged with danger.

He even whispers in Jack's ear that he has not enjoyed such a delicious *thrill* since the naval battle between Chinese and Japanese modern men-of-war, in which he had the extreme felicity of sailing skyward when the crack vessel of the yellow dragon was blown up with one of the Mikado's newfangled fish torpedoes; which Gordon, understanding the singular composition of his friend, hears with a grim smile.

He himself doubtless experiences a somewhat similar thrill, but it proceeds from a totally different cause—while Sir Roderic glories in the presence of dire danger, Jack eagerly anticipates the rescue of his sweetheart from the most dreadful fate which, in a lover's eyes, can befall her—that of being legally made the wife of a hated rival.

BOOK FOUR

HOW THE GAME WAS WON IN VENICE

CHAPTER XXXI

ELECTRICITY IN THE BRIDAL MARCH

As our little party advance the sound of many voices reaches their ears.

Sir Roderic frowns and mutters certain words in a manner that indicates displeasure. The affair promises to be even more serious than he at first believed, since Count Rubini, in the exuberance of his rapture at his approaching nuptials, has invited friends to witness the ceremony, rather than make it a quiet affair.

The nature of the Venetian is very similar to that of a Parisian—they are both inordinately fond of show and dramatic effects—a French soldier bearing a pardon would take no pleasure in delivering it quietly, but must wait until the condemned is about to die, and then rush upon the scene like a hurricane,

waving the precious paper above his head, and creating the wildest enthusiasm.

So with the count.

He has figured that the ordinary man may be married only once, and such an important event should be most fittingly observed.

Although the presence of many guests may add piquancy to the adventure, the fact does not cause any abatement of the fever raging in the veins of those who have invaded the ancient chateau with the design of spoiling the conspirators' plans—in truth, the more difficulties that arise the stronger grows their determination.

One side must win, the other lose, and as yet it seems a toss-up as to which will carry off the palm, though the advantage is apparently with those in possession.

Rinaldo is a prize worth drawing,and Sir Roderic mentally congratulates himself on the good fortune that has permitted them to seize upon such a factor in the game.

But for his acquaintance with the old historical pile of masonry they would never have been in the hunt at all, or if so, badly handicapped by a lack of knowledge concerning these things, so essential to the welfare of their plans.

Rinaldo has not spent the best years of his life in the Rubini service without learning every chamber and passage and secret stairway of the palace.

Had the side door failed to work he could have taken them underneath one of the floors, where a trap would have given them the entrance they sought.

Great is Rinaldo, and greater still the power of the spell that urges him to devote his energies to the success of their plans—many things good and evil have been acomplished with revenge as the *motif.*

It is not the design of Jack Gordon to be compelled to appear upon the floor of the room during the progress of the ceremony and carry Hildegarde off in the presence of those relatives and friends assembled to witness the marriage of the count, though if circumstances compel him to adopt such desperate tactics he will not be found wanting.

There is a reasonable hope that they may have arrived before the time set for the imposing ceremony, and that Rinaldo, with his intimate acquaintance with the palace can lead them to the ladies' boudoir, where arrangements may be made to quietly steal the bride and her mother, leaving the guests to learn the sorrowful truth later on.

Alas! just as Burns tells us, even the best laid

plans of mice and men "aft gang aglee," and although the purpose of the invaders is one of worthy justice, they are not outside the pale of the law.

It is Rinaldo the guide who first discovers this fact, his ears being keenly on the alert for news, for he has become impressed with the notion that the success or failure of the whole enterprise depends almost wholly upon his wisdom and guidance.

The clatter of tongues has ceased and they can hear strains of music.

It is the wedding march from *Lohengrin.*

Never did the sweet strains strike a greater chill to a human heart than they do upon that of Jack Gordon.

In a flash he can mentally see his Hildegarde dressed in white, walking at the side of the proud count—walking as in a dream, for the spell of the hypnotist is upon her, and she knows no will but that of her uncle guardian, Colonel Monks.

Jilted lovers have doubtless heard this sweet refrain ere now, and ground their teeth in rage at the thought of losing the game—with Jack the agony is different, since he knows the girl's heart belongs to him, and that she is being sacrificed upon the altar of mammon.

The chill is instantly succeeded by a burning

glow, and Gordon is himself again, ready to dare anything, all things, that she may be snatched from such an appalling fate—ready to shoot down this sprig of Venetian nobility if necessary, let the inevitable consequences be what they may.

"Do you hear that, Sir Roderic?" he cries, seizing the soldier's arm fiercely.

"Surely, my dear boy—it is the bridal march beyond a question. Keep cool, now, and we will venture to play our last trump."

Cool! He might as well appeal to the burning lakes of eternal fires that at periods break forth from Vesuvius and Ætna—Jack knows the crisis of his life is at hand, and that by a bold stroke he must either win or lose all.

"There is no longer any chance of our finding the ladies alone in their boudoir. We must seek the drawing-room—it is to be Lochinvar to the letter. Do you hear, men, Antonio and Rinaldo—we shall have to snatch her from the altar. Are you ready to assist, or must we proceed alone?"

At least Gordon has not lost his senses in this crisis, which fact Sir Roderic notes with considerable satisfaction.

His firm hand regains possession of the tiller, and

guides the ship upon which are staked all of their hopes.

"Of course they will go with us—put on the masks we prepared, and no one will be able to swear to your identity. As for us, little we care, Jack my boy. Remember, while you may threaten with your revolver, do not shoot until it is absolutely necessary, and then only to wound. This is a serious business, invading a count's palace in Venice, and may follow us even to London if we are compelled to do damage."

"For Heaven's sake let us be moving. Even now they may be tying the knot that the law will not undo," groans poor Jack, who is passing through the greatest torture of his whole existence.

Sir Roderic in a measure feels for him, although not having a sweetheart in peril he can not wholly appreciate the situation.

The two Italians have hardly counted on making an appearance in the midst of a room full of guests, and if left to their own judgment might respectfully decline such an experience; but the enthusiasm of the soldier sweeps away their scruples—possibly he has a slight hypnotic influence over them, since this seems to be in the air and explains much that hereto-

fore has been set down as cloudy, or due entirely to personal magnetism on the part of the leader.

They have produced large silk handkerchiefs, and these are deftly bound around their faces in such a manner as to effectually conceal every portion of their physiognomy below the eyes. All of which has taken but a few seconds of time to accomplish, though in Jack's mind the delay is very exasperating.

"To the chapel!" exclaims Sir Roderic.

"This way, signors," says Rinaldo, leading off.

They are at his heels.

The music grows louder as they advance, and to Jack's mind seems to sound the death knell of his fondest hopes.

Fierce thoughts fill his mind, for he is hardly himself under the circumstances, and as his hand caresses the smooth butt of the revolver that peeps from his pocket, he mentally registers a vow that if too late to save Hildegarde from being a wife, he at least will have the savage satisfaction of making her a widow.

Still more sonorous the music to which many a bridal procession has kept time, but which Jack can never fancy again, since to him it will recall this awful hour, and sound like a funeral dirge.

Beyond they discover many lights.

Like other palaces and castles in the old world, this ancient home of the Rubinis has within its walls a little chapel in which private services are held, weddings or it may be funerals of the family conducted, and such functions observed as were absolutely necessary in the dim past with every noble family.

Such a place has been looked upon as holy, though in these degenerate days it is to be feared this reverence is not so universal as in the times when men were less given to seeking the smiles of fortune, and the ladies to the follies of dress.

As our friends push forward with eagerness, they can see that this little chapel contains quite a number of people, who are seated and apparently deeply engrossed in observing some interesting scene.

The notes of the organ have ceased to swell through the corridors leading to the chapel, and can be but faintly heard in *pianissimo*, as an indistinct accompaniment to the ceremony.

Jack's ears have caught another sound, that electrifies him.

It is a sonorous voice, uttering words in Latin, and even though he might be unable to understand their actual meaning, it is easy for him to guess their significance.

A priest has commenced the ceremony, and no one can say whether it will be long or exceedingly brief.

Should it be concluded before this madman can break into the charmed circle, all is apparently lost.

It is this conviction that fires his soul and causes him to suddenly leave his companions in the lurch, springing forward like a chamois among the dizzy crags of the Alps.

Figures bar his progress.

They are servants of the palace, who, devoured by an overpowering and natural curiosity to see a wedding in high life, especially when one of the contracting parties is their master, have huddled together near the double doors.

It must be something more serious than this to interfere with the passage of an aroused lover.

He reaches the group that blocks his way, and thrusting the astonished servitors aside in an unceremonious fashion, crosses the threshold of the chapel, quite indifferent to the fact that he stands on holy ground.

CHAPTER XXXII

SWORDS BEFORE THE ALTAR

Jack Gordon, with one comprehensive sweep of his eyes around the chapel, has seen that perhaps two-score of people are present, most of them ladies, though more than one gay uniform proclaims the presence of some military friend of the count, perhaps of the German, Russian or French army.

These people are of only secondary importance to Gordon, whose gaze has been immediately fastened upon that scene in front which appears to be holding the attention of everyone present.

It is a familiar sight, to be witnessed any day of the week, and yet with what peculiar significance it comes to our Jack when one of the high contracting parties chances to be his own sweetheart.

There is a figure in a gaudy uniform, for the count is a military man and has gained some honor in Abyssinia—also a dainty form in white that sets Jack's

heart to leaping madly, and the solemn priest in his robes, together with several attendants.

The monotonous voice of the father sounds very distinctly through the chapel.

It is, taken all in all, a very solemn scene, and as impressive as the rites of the church can command.

Every eye is glued upon the couple kneeling there before the rail.

Jack Gordon sees, and his mind is made up on the spot—were ten thousand people present instead of twoscore yet would he claim what Heaven gave him, nor shall his own be stolen away through chicanery and monumental egotism.

Up the aisle he strides.

A few observe, without comprehending the meaning of his presence, while others are so taken up with the entrancing spectacle at the altar that they have no warning of the coming tempest until it bursts.

Straight up to the spot where the couple kneel Jack strides.

The father sees his approach with wonder.

Perhaps Jack's appearance might suggest the idea that he has recently broken out of some insane asylum.

At any rate, the spectacle of a late guest interrupting the ceremony is so singular as to cause the priest a shock of indignation.

He shoots a glance toward the right where stands Colonel Monks, together with a lady whose face is partly veiled.

No help is to be expected from that quarter, for Monks seems to be seized with a sudden cold chill at sight of the advancing man,—Monks, who can never forget with what persistency Jack Gordon has followed his ward in the past, and before whose vision rise up scenes connected with bombarded Zanzibar and the sinking of the slave dhow.

"I forbid this marriage!" exclaims Jack in a loud tone.

A flutter of voices greets this tragic utterance, above which can be heard the startled exclamation from the kneeling count as he bounds to his feet, and a cry of joy from Hildegarde.

In that moment Monks loses his power.

The strange, magnetic current connecting his soul with that of his subject has been severed by the appearance of Jack upon the scene.

Hildegarde has uttered Jack's name in accents of joy, and to the amazement of priest and guests she springs to his side.

The count is speechless with fury.

As for the worthy father, who probably has not been made acquainted with the true inside working

of the facts, he deems it his duty to demand the why and wherefore of what appears to be a desecration of a holy office.

"You ask why I am here, holy father—why I interrupt this marriage? Listen then—it is because this lady belongs to me, because her heart is mine. She will tell you so herself—her actions proclaim it before you all. That man who scowls there, her uncle and guardian, has been able to influence her by his devilish will power, but to-day she is of age, and here in the presence of these good people you shall see that she refuses to be united to a gentleman whom she does not love. I know nothing of Count Rubini save that he has been deceived himself if he imagines he is enthroned in this heart, where there is room for but one, and that space I have long filled. Have I spoken the truth, Hildegarde?"

"Yes," she replies, bravely, now that the form of her lover comes between herself and Monks' gaze, as a talisman against evil.

This passage of time has given the others a chance to recover. Monks realizes that unless heroic measures are taken all is lost, and the count is naturally in anything but an angelic frame of mind over the remarkable outcome of his marriage.

This is but natural for him, and no man could go through the experience without an outburst.

Fancy his feelings—at one minute kneeling there, about to be united in the holy bonds of wedlock to a charming girl, the envy of his guests—the next the object of their pity and contempt, for his intended bride has fled to the protection of a rival's arms, and he hears that hated individual claiming her for his own.

The Italian temper is ever irascible and easily aroused, since these children of a warm clime are by nature hot-blooded. A less serious cause than this would be sufficient to throw a son of Venice into a fine frenzy.

Count Rubini realizes that he has been publicly insulted, and while his fury might better be directed toward the schemer through whom he has been led into this trouble, he sees in honest Jack Gordon the visible source of his degradation.

Revenge is a part of the Venetian's code—even in Corsica to-day the vendetta does not rage more furiously than it was once carried on by the old families of the island city Venice, and it runs in the blood.

No matter how honorable the count's motives may have been up to this point—no matter if he too has

been somewhat under the potent influence of that disciple of the famous Svengali, all else is swept away in the furious rush of anger which overwhelms him at seeing his bride shielded by the protecting arm of another, to whom she clings so fondly.

Sun, moon, and stars may have fashioned his horoscope, and this the hour of his deepest humiliation be the hour of his doom—little recks he, so long as the fires of hate and aroused pride spur him on.

The count speaks English, though with an effort, like the majority of his countrymen, and realizing from Jack's address and appearance to what country he belongs, it is in that tongue he thunders out hoarsely.

"Unhand of that lady, sir, or I shall you cut down before her eyes. She is to be my wife—her consent have I it already. You shall enjoy the felicity in the hands of my servants to watch the ceremony quite. Once more I say—release my Hildegarde!"

Jack has surveyed the fuming nobleman in a cool, sneering manner not at all calculated to calm his anger. At the last remark however, the color leaps into his cheeks and his eyes flash with a dangerous light which might well serve as a warning, could such a hot blood as Rubini see the lightnings back of the clouds.

"Excuse me, but she is *my* Hildegarde, sir. You can have the lady's own word for that. Moreover, being of age, mark you, and her own mistress, she elects to leave this uncongenial house and its people, and will accompany me, her future husband. Let him who dares stand in the way."

Bold words, these, to be addressed to an Italian in his own palace—bolder even than those Marmion of old flung in the teeth of haughty Lord Douglas ere speeding his horse across the drawbridge of the Scottish castle just as it trembled on the rise—and again it is a Briton who utters them.

The count accepts the challenge.

Jack, with the trembling, white-robed Hildegarde hanging to his left arm has only taken a couple of paces away from the chancel railing where rest the cushions upon which the bridal pair had been kneeling, when he is confronted by a figure in an elegant military uniform—a figure that waves both arms threateningly, and places one hand finally upon the hilt of a sword as though about to draw and run the daring intruder through.

That is quite enough for Jack. He has stood all he can bear, and now his feelings toward this man who has come within an ace of robbing him of a wife, break all restraint.

Dropping Hildegarde's clinging arm, he goes at the Italian as only the Anglo-Saxon race dreams of opening a pitched battle—with his fists.

Rubini possibly is not a master of the art of self-defense; or it may be he is taken off his guard just then, so wholly is his attention engaged in the task of dragging an unwilling blade from its sheath.

Be that as it may he proves his ability to execute a most brilliant flank movement, nor does it make any difference with respect to the success of the military maneuver, that half of the time his polished boots occupy the space where his head should be.

In plain language the elegant count receives such a stunning blow straight from the shoulder of the stout Briton, who learned the rudiments of boxing at Eton and Oxford, that he is sent spinning like a cart-wheel across the open space and landing finally squarely in the laps of those ladies who have pre-empted the front seats in the chapel. All of which is of course quite confusing to the wretched nobleman, nor does the chorus of feminine shrieks that arises from his immediate vicinity tend to console him.

Jack's act in demoralizing the bridegroom is exactly in keeping with his evident intention to run away with the bride.

He speedily discovers that he does not quite own the earth, even if the sun never sets upon the domains of the ruler to whom he bends the knee.

The male guests by this time, as it were, secure their second wind—that is to say they have in a measure recovered from their intense surprise, and natural indignation against the disturber of the peace, this bold Lochinvar of Venice, urges them to act. Therefore in various quarters they rise in their seats, and the gleam of naked swords is seen in the chapel, where holy peace was intended to reign.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AN OAKEN DOOR BETWEEN

Doubtless this is not the first time a bridal scene in Venice has been rudely disturbed by the harsh clank of warriors' steel, for the past history of the romantic city has long been famous as a repository of strange scenes in which the human passions love and jealousy assume a very prominent part.

At the same time it is possible that never before has a bold Briton appeared in the role of a Lochinvar in a Venetian home.

Thus far, Jack has had matters pretty much his own way. Hildegarde has turned to him with the lovelight glowing in her eyes, and a look upon her dear face that arouses him to do his utmost in her behalf; while the noble Rubini, in endeavoring to demand satisfaction, has been effectually disposed of for the present.

This is too good to last.

The sight of their host, the debonair count, being tossed aside as unceremoniously as one might cast away an old glove, has startled as well as angered the guests. They may not appreciate the true inwardness of the matter—the right and wrong does not appeal to them as it might in calmer moods—they only know that they have been invited here to the Rubini palace to witness the marriage of the worthy count to a lovely creature, and that in the midst of the holy ceremony a bear of a young Englishman, perhaps presuming upon the long friendship between the allies, has rushed upon the scene, struck poor Rubini in a heap, and, by the gods, is now bearing away the count's intended bride.

No wonder the spirit of chivalry is aroused—no wonder strange French and Austrian and Russian oaths are heard—no wonder the men who have a connection with the embassy of each foreign country spring to their feet and claw for a weapon. Such an outrage has never before been known in the category of strange events that come under the observation of the diplomatic corps.

They are for the count, to a man.

As there are at least ten of these gentlemen guests present, the chances are Jack must have had his hands full, did he happen to be there alone; and

besides, there are servants beyond the threshold of the chapel, who, if not capable of performing prodigies of valor like the gaily uniformed diplomats among the lady guests, can at least block with their bodies the retreat of the daring kidnapper of a fair bride.

That is where Sir Roderic comes in.

He has not been far away while this remarkable scene has taken place.

True, the lover's ardor carried Gordon into the chapel ahead of him, and upon finding that Jack is well able to look after his share of the business, Sir Roderic sets about other matters.

He has swept his eyes around.

The chapel is built at one end of the chateau, and the door through which they have entered is the only way of leaving, unless one chooses to make use of the windows.

Sir Roderic's vast experience teaches him the value of time as a factor in making an escape from such a nest.

To be hampered by a hot pursuit on the part of the excited military guests may ruin their well laid plans.

It is, therefore, with the idea in view of preventing any such pursuit that he hastily examines the

doors, and then gives a quick order to Antonio, who is at his elbow.

By this time his presence is needed in the chapel—Jack has started to leave the apartment, Rubini is floundering among the shrieking lady guests, and Hildegarde's mother, breaking away from her brother, who has lost his power of hypnotic influence under the sensational interruption of his plans, hastens after the departing couple.

It is, taken all together, a most remarkable picture, and one that will never be forgotten by those who participate.

The first object of the various representatives of foreign courts who are friends of the noble count, is to block the passage of Jack and prevent him from gaining the exit.

Thus, they head toward the middle aisle from various points, as the spokes of a wheel join at the hub.

Gordon, believing that the disposal of the count is only an event, and not the final scene in the exciting drama, expects further difficulty in quitting the chapel.

He would be very simple not to anticipate more trouble, with those eager sword blades leaping from

their scabbards, and the Babel of noises that arises around him.

Believing, therefore, that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and wishing these embassy hotspurs to know that he stands ready to defend himself against their blades, be the consequences what they may, Jack has snatched out his revolver, and holds it in plain view.

Even this would probably have little effect upon the friends of the count, for they are as ten to one, and might be ashamed to feel that a single man has cowed them.

It is the appearance of Sir Roderic upon the scene that does the business.

The veteran sees Jack's hostile move and goes him one better—in plain words, he holds a "little persuader" in each hand, and as he stands in the aisle near the door, his voice rings out above the general confusion, just as the clarion notes of a cavalry bugle might sound over the bursting of shells, the cheers of charging legions and the trample of many hoofs upon the field of battle.

There is not one in the chapel but who hears what Sir Roderic so clearly proclaims, and even the demoralized Rubini, staggering to his feet in a

dazed condition, understands that it is a master who lays down the law.

"On your lives, stop where you are! The man who wishes to die need only advance, and I will accommodate him. If you knew the truth you would not wish to harm a hair of this young man's head. He is only claiming his own, which was being stolen from him. I say, stand back, or I shall shoot to kill! Let no man dare to raise a hand to prevent their departure!"

The shrieks have ceased, for those who cried out now listen to what he says, no doubt attracted and held spellbound by the voice that comes as from a master.

Ah! what a picture—that one man holding all within those chapel walls subject to his will.

Svengali, in the zenith of his power, could not hold a candle to this, and there is Colonel Monks, who has performed some queer antics with subjects who at his wish changed into rocks or donkeys never has he been able to control twoscore of persons at a time, so that not a finger or a head is moved.

The magic of it all lies in the two awe-inspiring tools which Sir Roderic keeps prominently before the eyes of those he intimidates, proving that a re-

volver in the hand of a determined man may be a mighty instrument for coercion or peace.

Jack has not been asleep during the interim—Jack who knows this snake has been "scotched," not killed, and whose aim it is, just at present, to place himself and his beloved on the other side of the chapel doors.

Pushing steadily forward, he passes the staring guests huddled among the seats.

Not a hand is stretched out to stay his progress, though it is quite a different spectacle these good people have come prepared to witness.

Perhaps among the guests there may be a few whose sympathies incline toward the bold lover who has dared invade the sanctity of the Rubini chapel and claim his own before the very altar.

All friends are not sincere, and there may be among the guests those who have secret cause to exult over Rubini's downfall, as well as to rejoice that a sacrifice of love has been so signally averted.

These are greatly in the minority, however, and in the main it is with scowls and enmity that Jack's triumphal march down the aisle and to the chapel door, is greeted.

Little he cares, so long as the main object is achieved—let them frown and gnash their teeth in

rage, if Heaven only allow him to bear Hildegarde safely out of their clutches.

They arrive at the door, now only partly open, for Antonio, aided and abetted by Rinaldo, and acting under the hasty orders from Sir Roderic, has closed one of the sides, and stands ready to fasten the other after those he serves have accomplished their exit.

Then comes an interruption.

Some one just behind Jack calls aloud, and in a beseeching tone:

"Would you desert me, my child?"

Hildegarde, who up to this moment has in her exultation forgotten everything save the presence of her Jack, turns at the words, with a little shriek:

"My mother—shall she not go with us Jack—I could not live without her?" she exclaims.

"Yes, indeed, we had planned for that. She is doubly welcome; but seconds are precious. Even Sir Roderic may not be able to keep those firebrands in check much longer. Therefore, I beg of you, hasten beyond, and trust everything to us."

They do well to have the utmost confidence in Jack, for he has before now accomplished such wonderful things in defense of the woman he loves, that nothing seems impossible to a man of his indomitable will, backed up by Sir Roderic.

At least that part of the compact has been done, since the two ladies have passed beyond the doors.

Sir Roderic hears the signal from Jack that tells him of the fact.

He dares not take his eyes off his enemies even for a second of time.

When he moves it is backward, watching the gathering forces steadily, just as a wild beast tamer retreats from the cage in which he has been holding an entertainment with his savage pets.

Step by step he goes in this crab-like retrograde movement, and the count's friends keep pace with him.

The disappearance of the ladies has aroused them to the fact that they are making a wretched showing against the enemy, or perhaps familiarity with the weapons he carries begins to arouse a feeling of contempt.

At last Sir Roderic touches the door.

"Antonio!" he says.

"Here, signor," comes the response.

"Is all ready?"

"Si, excellency."

"Then look out—I am coming—*now!*"

He leaps backward through the opening, and in-

stantly the door clangs shut. Antonio turns the huge key and snatches it away, just as an uproar arises within the chapel, and men's figures are hurled savagely against the oaken planks.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE FLIGHT ALONG THE GRAND CANAL

It has been a close shave, but then "a miss is as good as a mile," and Sir Roderic has good reason to congratulate himself as he hears the clamor within the chapel, and realizes that stout doors lie between those enraged friends of the count, and their little party.

To delay now, however, would be foolish, even suicidal. The good work is only partially accomplished and much remains to be done before they can call themselves safe.

In the hallway he finds gathered quite a heterogeneous company, as seen by the aid of the lamps fastened to brackets.

There are Antonio and Rinaldo, both wearing the silk mufflers below their eyes so that no one may recognize them, Jack and the two ladies, and a number of the count's servants.

These latter have seen enough of the affair to become quite demoralized, and their knees quake at the sight of Sir Roderic's shooting-irons.

They know the count so well that any one who would dare brave him in his own castle and even humiliate him before his invited guests must command their admiration and awe.

Sir Roderic simply turns upon these fellows and orders them to scatter to various quarters about the chateau where their duties might call them; and it is almost ludicrous to see how every mother's son of them springs to obey, vanishing from view like a dream.

All save one.

This is an old and decrepit fellow, doubtless a retainer under the Rubinis for three-quarters of a century.

"You may kill me, Signor, but I shall not leave my post where the master stationed me," says this ancient chap composedly.

"Stay where you are then—no harm shall befall you," returns the soldier, keenly alive to the beauty of discipline.

Besides, as Antonio has the key, the old fellow certainly can do no damage.

Already the others are en route, and Sir Roderic

lingers only long enough to assure himself that the doors are in no danger of being burst open by any ordinary force which those imprisoned within the chapel may be able to bring against them.

Then, having satisfied his mind with regard to this matter he follows after them.

The flutter of white dresses serves as a guide, and suddenly he remembers that the Hildegarde of long ago, now a charming widow, is about to be thrown under his protection. He experiences a peculiar sensation, as though a sudden blast of air has taken his breath away. And then he actually chuckles, this bachelor of Mars, as if mightily pleased.

There is an explanation due him, which may straighten out the tangles of the past, and it is in anticipation of this that he awaits the future with so much calmness.

At the same time he is deeply interested in the flutter of the white skirts beyond, and more than once strains his hearing, under the belief that he has caught her well-remembered voice inquiring after him.

Antonio and Rinaldo deserve a pension for the creditable manner in which they have served their employers.

True, their work has been all cut and dried, but

many men of their class would have collapsed at the last moment, and had such a thing occurred Sir Roderic could not now be congratulating himself on the success attained by his plans.

Rinaldo is again in the lead, since to him is given the task of finding the road to the culinary department, where they may secure their gondola and beat a retreat via the Grand Canal, ere the pursuit is begun in earnest.

Through the vaulted passages sounds again come to their ears, but this time not the sweet strains of the wedding march—all that has been indefinitely postponed, and instead they hear loud, angry shouts, together with a tremendous thumping, as the count's guest beat their displeasure upon the oaken panels.

This too grows fainter as they put greater distance between themselves and the place of disturbance, until through the tangle of crooked passages it booms no longer on their hearing.

Rinaldo has done well.

The odors that greet their olfactories have ere now warned them of the near-by presence of the kitchen, where is being prepared the supper that will never be served, since the wedding is off.

Suddenly they enter upon this mystic realm in a

Venetian palace. Numerous cooks are at work under the eye of a chef, possibly from the Caffe Quadri.

The astonishment of these good people, when our little company unexpectedly bursts in upon their domain is beyond description.

Some of the fugitive servitors arrived in advance, but they have hardly had time to catch their breath and declare that something wonderful has occurred, before the fugitives burst upon the scene.

The two men, disguised with red silk mufflers half covering their faces, the presence of a young foreigner, and last but not least the ladies, in the younger of whom they one and all recognize the count's intended bride, paralyze the kitchen attendants quite as thoroughly as if that great magician Monks, master of the human will, has wrought a spell upon them.

Then comes Sir Roderic, bursting upon the scene like a young hurricane.

His appearance adds to their consternation, for, to be ready should some sudden emergency require immediate action, the soldier still carries a revolver in one hand, and in the eyes of the cooks this is a weapon to be feared.

The chef is undoubtedly carrying out his part of the contract to the letter, for the sacred precinct

over which he reigns is redolent with appetizing odors that remind our soldier bachelor that he has not eaten a bite since noon.

Alas! this is neither the time nor the place to loiter, nor would he care to partake of the count's hospitality, for they are deadly foes.

Sir Roderic has known what it is to hunger, since he was in wretched Paris during that time when Wilhelm's Prussian hosts surrounded the city on the Seine, and a wonderful appetite for horse flesh was developed among the besieged.

No one is more anxious to leave the classic shades of the Rubini palace than Rinaldo, the guide. Perhaps fears have arisen to annoy him, and he at last realizes what the result of this madcap enterprise will be to him, should the count learn of the part he has taken in the abduction of his bride.

Some one will be sure to recognize him, in spite of his disguising red silk handkerchief. Perhaps one of the Englishmen may carelessly mention his full name. His suspense is really painful. Therefore he hastens to leave the room, and passing out upon a little stone platform, jumps into a gondola.

Thus he receives them as they come, and when the two ladies are snugly ensconced within the little cabin of the gondola, Jack feels ready to shout for joy.

"All aboard!" he cries.

Sir Roderic has lingered a little, perhaps to awe the kitchen staff still further, or, it may be because he feels somewhat peculiar in connection with the meeting that is bound to take place immediately.

There is at last no further excuse for loitering behind, and casting all such thoughts to the winds he steps aboard. At once the gondoliers shove off, and under the half darkened arch they glide.

Their sensations are somewhat different from those which marked their coming but a short time before —then all was doubt and uncertainty, whereas now they know, in some measure at least, what the result is to be.

Jack has been prompt to take advantage of his prerogative, and coolly kisses the count's intended bride with the right of one who has won and who means to wear; nor does Hildegarde show any evidence that such a proceeding is disagreeable to her—this time another wonderful wizard has undertaken to enthrall her in his net, and his name is Cupid, than whom none can hypnotize with more certain effect.

And Sir Roderic—perhaps his courage has failed him, or it may be necessary that he remain outside the cabin while they glide along under the arched

passage, though Rinaldo certainly knows every inc of the way, and if he needs any help, surely An tonio is close at hand to extend it.

Lights gleam ahead.

The Grand Canal is at hand.

The two gondoliers remove the mufflers from thei faces in order that they may not attract attention.

Then the gondola passes under the arch and res upon the bosom of that most famous water street i all the world, the Grand Canal of Venice.

Still the boats go and come, and the many colore lanterns look like the twinkling lights of fairy land.

Jack leans out of the cabin and tugs at the coat o the soldier.

"Better come inside, Sir Roderic—there is roo for all. And besides, some of them may be on th watch from the windows," he argues.

That last overcomes his scruples, and endeavorin to appear quite unembarrassed the son of Mars en ters, to hear her say:

"Sir Roderic, I am very happy to meet you agai after all these years, and it pleases me to know tha Hildegarde and myself owe you such a debt o gratitude for releasing us from my half-brother' baneful influence. Will you shake hands with me

Sir Roderic—we were once the best of friends, you know?"

He no longer wonders whether her once dearly loved voice can have the power to thrill him that it formerly possessed, for the sensation is too evident to be mistaken.

Through this hand he received the most cruel blow a man may know here in this world, yet eagerly he takes it in his own, and gives it a hearty pressure. A man built upon Sir Roderic's generous plan can bear no malice; and besides does he not remember what the daughter said, that there had been a terrible mistake—that his unprincipled rival had played him a miserable trick and won a bride though he never enjoyed her love or respect after she learned of his duplicity.

He utters some commonplace remark that answers the purpose and then employs his time in looking out between the curtains that encircle the little cabin; for it is a matter of considerable importance as to what may be the next move on the part of those who conspire against their peace of mind. And in another minute a sharp exclamation from the soldier proclaims that his scrutiny has not been without its result.

CHAPTER XXXV

ANGLO-SAXON VIM

Although young Gordon has not passed through a tithe of the strange adventures that have fallen to Sir Roderic's lot during a life spent amid war's alarms, he has at least had experience enough to know that a white man should never shout until he is out of the woods. In other words he does not deceive himself with the delusion that they have already won the victory because Colonel Monks and the count are locked up in the Rubini chapel, and beat against the sturdy doors with but a wretched hope of speedy release until the panels can be broken in by the servants of the house.

When, therefore, Sir Roderic gives utterance to that exclamation, Jack is not very much surprised after all. He has been expecting something of the sort, even while for the moment indulging in the bliss of enfolding his sweetheart in his arms. So

he immediately leaves his seat and makes for the side of the veteran, who still looks out between the friendly curtains that have been drawn to shield the occupants of the cabin.

It is on the side toward the buildings.

They have ere now passed the Rubini palace, and Jack notices that his companion's attention is turned backward.

Instinctively he looks in the same direction, and immediately discovers what caused Sir Roderic's exclamation.

The heavenly lanterns, materially assisted by the illumination of the Grand Canal, cast a glow across the façade of the palace, so that each window and individual specimen of stucco-work is readily distinguished.

As before, lights can be seen in a number of these windows, but toward none of these is their attention called.

There is what appears to be a narrow slit in the wall—a dark, yawning crevice, which no doubt marks the termination of some secret passage leading from the palace chapel.

It is this point at which they gaze, for something is taking place there, something that is of moment to them.

A figure can be seen, a figure that, half projecting from the slit in the wall hangs on with a desperate clutch, and waves an arm wildly in the air—a figure that gives vent to vociferous shouts that ring out above the songs of gondoliers and the laughter of pleasure seekers on the Grand Canal.

That voice they recognize as belonging to the count, now almost rendered insane by the public insult put upon him in his own chateau by the abduction of his intended bride.

What is the burden of his song—something that must always attract the attention of the average gondolier in search of a fat fare; for these boatmen of Venice are but our cab-drivers with another variety of vehicle.

He offers the most alluring prize ever dangled before the eyes of a gondolier.

A dozen hear the loud call, and instantly turn the prows of their boats in the direction of the palace wall—they churn the water like mad in the race to be first.

So Sir Roderic has seen alligators rush upon some bird he has shot in the swamps of Florida. To the winner goes the prize.

"Row faster, Rinaldo—Antonio!" he says, although

there is hardly any need of this admonition, as the boat is speeding along at a good clip.

Already the leading gondola has arrived at a point beneath the slit in the wall, and the disappointed ones cluster around, with loud-voiced boatmen venting their spleen upon the head of the lucky chap.

The clinging figure outlined against the wall, lets go above and drops lightly aboard—the distance is not great, and no damage is done.

Immediately another form is thrust out from the opening—Jack recognizes it as Colonel Monks, by the length of the legs.

Down he goes too, when a third man appears, and there is a flash of glittering epaulets and numerous medals fastened to a gaudy uniform as this attaché of a foreign embassy follows his leader into the gondola Really, that old castle wall seems to be alive with human missiles, for hardly has one shot forth than the vacated space is immediately occupied by another warrior in gay trappings, who follows the good example set by his predecessors.

"The more the merrier," reflects Sir Roderic. Each additional recruit means so many seconds of time, and a greater amount of space covered by the fugitive gondola.

No doubt the count is fuming at the delay, as he

sees the boat upon which his suspicions rest moving swiftly away.

They hear him shout at the surrounding gondoliers threatening them with dire things unless they break away and allow a passage.

Then the boat shoots forward, regardless of the fact that a figure clad in all the paraphernalia of an officer high in rank is dangling above.

An ominous splash announces the safe arrival of some foreign general in the warm embrace of the Grand Canal, from whence he will be unceremoniously dragged by the other boatmen, a woful object indeed.

Meanwhile the gondola which has entered into the count's services has forged ahead of the others, and starts in pursuit of the phantom craft ahead.

Those upon the canal, always ready for a frolic, realizing that there is fun at hand, at once start in to keep the leading boat company, so that instead of one gondola, a flotilla, which is being augmented with every passing second, chases the craft of our friends.

Others are in a position to cut off the flight of the fugitives, and both Jack and the veteran, realizing this, keep themselves in readiness to meet such an emergency with promptness.

There is, however, an unwritten law that impels

these boatmen of the Grand Canal not to interfere in a race or a chase, no matter what inducements may be held out to them.

Fortunately our friends have not very far to go ere reaching the spot where Chauncey awaits them.

Once on the hustling little Yankee launch and they can bid defiance to the best gondolier in all Venice, for muscle can not hold its own against the power of machinery.

The count is urging his boatmen to make superhuman efforts, and on a long run possibly Antonio and Rinaldo might find it difficult to keep from being overtaken, though no one thinks of finding fault with the manner in which they handle the long sweeps by means of which the boat is propelled.

Looking ahead Jack discovers the launch.

Chauncey stands erect near the stern, and waves some object in the air, which as near as Jack can make out is a small American flag, while over the intervening water comes the encouraging sound of his high pitched voice:

"Thwee cheers and a tigah! Evwything weady, my boys—come alongside!"

Now he has dropped down to his wonderful little polished engine—the cedar craft begins to move out from the side of the canal, going at a reduced rate.

Jack guesses his idea instantly—it is to save time while the transfer is being made, otherwise the pursuing craft might overhaul them.

Wise Chauncey! He has more in that head than the casual observer might credit him with.

Sir Roderic also appreciates the move, and directs his men to get alongside with as much dispatch as possible.

Perhaps two ladies never before left Venice in such haste and under the peculiar conditions that govern their departure, but even the lack of a trunk filled with finery is not sufficient cause for dismay when a hated marriage can be avoided by flight.

So Hildegarde thinks, and the presence of her mother brings much consolation.

The gap narrows, and now the gondola shoots alongside the little launch.

Immediately Antonio, who drops his oar, has gripped hold of the cedar boat near the bow.

Chauncey starts ahead at full speed, and thus tows the gondola, though the strain is pretty rough on poor Antonio.

At once Jack and Sir Roderic transfer themselves to the launch, and in a jiffy assist the ladies over the side.

When this is done they feel almost tempted to give

vent to a pæan of victory, such is the temporary exultation that thrills their nerves.

The pursuing boats have decreased the distance separating them from their intended quarry, but are still behind.

Sir Roderic turns his attention to the gondoliers.

The boat alongside diminishes their speed greatly —indeed, unless it is sent adrift the pursuers must overtake them presently.

Antonio still hangs on grimly like a bull dog, though the strain of holding the two boats together is tremendous.

His position can not be long maintained.

Rinaldo is already aboard the launch, for to remain behind would be to suffer at the hands of the vengeful count.

They have cast their lot with the Englishmen, and must keep with them to the end—besides, Rinaldo and his comrade may still prove valuable allies in the work of threading the passages among the islands, should pursuit be made in the steam yacht.

"Let go the gondola, and come aboard, Antonio," calls out Roderic.

These are blessed words to the boatman, and instead of holding the gondola in he gives it a push to send it adrift.

As a consequence he falls souse into the canal; but maintaining his grip on the brass railing of the launch, finds little trouble in drawing himself on deck, where he remains to drip.

A wetting more or less does not amount to much in the estimation of these boatmen, who are after all regular water rats, spending most of their time upon the canals and bay.

Relieved of the burden which hung upon her as the Old Man of the Sea did to valorous Sinbad the sailor, the jaunty naphtha launch darts forward with almost redoubled speed, and with a merry "chug-chug-chug," that must sound mockingly in the ears of the baffled allies who vainly shout all manner of threats.

Twice has Colonel Monks seen this same detested Yankee invention defeat his dearest plans, and in spite of his kindred ties he is in a humor to wish that the land beyond the Atlantic, with its enterprise and push that reaches into every section of the known world, might be enclosed by a wall ten times as high as any China ever knew.

And as the little engine nobly does its duty, those on the launch wave a taunting farewell to the allies upon the gondola, which is being rapidly left in the lurch.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE WARRIOR ENSNARED

There is reason for rejoicing, and even the cautious soldier of fortune, who has seen apparent victory turned into disastrous defeat on many an occasion, finds it difficult to restrain his exuberant feelings.

Antonio and Rinaldo are enjoying their first ride upon a modern naphtha launch, and the sensation rather paralyzes them for a brief time.

When they realize that despite the frantic efforts of the gondoliers in pursuit, the gap between the boats is constantly widening, their awe gives place to the wild enthusiasm of their warm Italian natures, and they do not hesitate to send many mocking cries back to the breathless rowers who strain every nerve until the veins stand out like whipcords and threaten to burst.

Venice will ring with the story by the next day's sunset.

It does not occur more than once in a decade that such a romantic event comes to pass within the confines of the water city.

Perhaps never, since Byron wrote of the queen of the Adriatic, has an Englishman made such a bold bid for a bride.

Sir Roderic says nothing, but continues to watch the boat in their rear, as though not quite certain what may be in store for them.

"I thought as much," he remarks finally, drawing the attention of Gordon again.

"What is it?" asks that worthy, uneasily, for now that the daring scheme has been carried into effect Jack's only fear is some conflict with the authorities, who may take it upon themselves to champion the count's cause, and send a man-o'-war after the fugitive launch.

"They have given up the pursuit," says Sir Roderic, quietly.

"That is something we can appreciate."

"The gondola has issued from the canal, just as we have done; only instead of turning to port it takes the starboard tack."

"Yes?"

"I can still catch its blue lanterns in the misty moonlight. They head straight for that light you can see yonder upon the water of the bay. Look! it waves to and fro in answer to a signal from the gondola. That means something."

"The steam yacht," mutters Jack.

"Exactly, and the signal of the count tells them to get the anchor up without delay. The fires are going, for I understand it was his intention to sail away upon his wedding trip on the yacht."

"Then pursuit will be speedy?"

Jack realizes that another crisis is about to bear down upon them, and instinctively he turns to the veteran for encouragement.

There are some persons so constituted that in times of trouble they appear to be a bulwark of protection, and those with whom fortune has associated them turn for sympathy and help in that quarter where experience has taught them it lies.

Such a man is Sir Roderic, and he never fails that companion who seeks his aid.

"There can be no doubt of that. They may even be after us in ten minutes," is the reply he makes.

"Then it is a pity we have not a dark night in which to slip away."

"Perhaps so, and yet it may in one way be to our advantage."

"How so?"

"You know our intention is to hug the shore as much as possible—to dodge in and out among the islands, and if we can escape capture to reach Austrian territory which is over fifty miles away."

"That is what we agree on."

"In the darkness such a task would be almost impossible, as we would be unable to see our course. The steam yacht dares not follow at our heels, owing to the shallow nature of the bays and sounds, so that she will be compelled to stand outside."

"Now I comprehend your idea. We hope to give her the slip between this time and daybreak, and perhaps reach Trieste in spite of her."

"Exactly. There is only one thing I fear, and that is the possibility of our finding them awaiting us when we reach open water at early dawn."

"Should such an event occur, what would be our best plan?"

"The emergency will be met. Perhaps we might go ashore and outwit them in that way, or attempt the same tactics that proved so successful on the other occasion."

Jack remembers.

In imagination he can see the disastrous effect of Sir Roderic's cannonading when the slave dhows attempted to block their passage from the main coast of Africa to Zanzibar.

To attempt such tactics upon the Adriatic may be a much more serious piece of business than among the slavers, and Italian courts being in sympathy with Count Rubini may choose to look upon them in the light of pirates, which is a consummation to their plans *not* devoutly to be wished but rather avoided.

However, this peril is of the future, and has not yet come to pass. They must not borrow trouble.

Jack forgets his fears, and proceeds to busy himself in making the ladies comfortable, while Sir Roderic joins Chauncey at the little gas motor in the stern, taking a lesson in running the engine, so that when the time comes he may stand watch and watch with the good natured American, allowing him to snatch a few hours' sleep.

There are plenty of rugs, and Gordon presently has Hildegarde and her mother comfortably placed. He sits down near them, where he can feast his eyes upon the dim outlines of his sweetheart's face, for Sir Roderic will allow no lights aboard.

Rinaldo and his compatriot are at the wheel, hav-

ing quite recovered from the queer sensation which almost overwhelmed them upon first boarding the little boat.

They have been duly impressed with the grave responsibilities resting upon their shoulders, and intend to merit the continued good opinion of their employers.

Sir Roderic sets an example that others may profit by. In many cases it is the leader who wins battles, who spurs his horse into the thick of the fight and carries his men along with his enthusiasm.

Looking back toward the many lights that gleam over the little waves of the harbor, Sir Roderic can distinguish the position of the count's steam yacht, and presently realizes that it is in motion.

To himself he is muttering a fragment of that story which in every country appeals to the hearts of lovers:

> "They have fast steeds, who follow,
> Quoth young Lochinvar."

Then Sir Roderic is conscious of a peculiar sensation in the region of the heart, as he suddenly remembers that in one sense of the word he too has been guilty of running away with a lady—not another man's bride, but rather his widow.

He steals a glance toward the cabin and the sound

of a voice thrills him as though he were the recipient of a galvanic shock.

Oh! traitor heart, how weak to give in so easily to the old witchery against which Sir Roderic has been steeling it for almost twenty years—yet at the sound of one voice the walls of his fortifications fall down in ruins, just as did those belonging to Jericho of old when the blast of the rams' horns had encompassed their doom. The son of Mars mentally groans and calls himself a fool, but that does not mend matters in the least, and then the philosophical side of his nature comes to the rescue.

Since fate has decided that it is to be, why make mountains out of mole hills—better take his medicine like a man—besides, he need not endeavor to convince himself it is bitter, when his heart cries out so eagerly for sympathy. So Sir Roderic throws resolutions to the winds, determines to give the lady every opportunity in the world to explain, and then secure at least a fair measure of happiness for his declining days.

Sir Roderic once again gives positive evidence that he possesses a level head.

Man was not intended to live alone, however much he may occasionally believe so.

All this while they are moving along at a fair

rate. Chauncey knows what a task he has before him, but believes the little launch will come up to the mark bravely. He receives much encouragement from the assurance of Sir Roderic while explaining the simple working of the engine.

Fainter grow the gleaming lights of Venice. All sounds have died away save the lapping of the dark waves against the side of the miniature craft, or the asthmatic wheeze of the engine, which is the worst element connected with the marvelous motive power.

Then an island or a promontory comes between and effectually hides all traces of the island city from their gaze. They are alone upon the waters that mark the head of the Adriatic sea. A glow upon the sky proclaims the quarter where the city lies.

Jack comes back to where they sit and smoke and converse in low tones—Jack, who is so very happy himself that he desires to see this good friend of his in the same boat.

"She would like to see you, Sir Roderic," is the message he bears, and which he delivers in a quiet voice.

The soldier is accustomed to obeying orders when they come from a recognized authority, and without

a word he rises, outwardly calm, but with his heart throbbing wildly.

To sit at her side, this woman whom he has never ceased to love, to hear her well-remembered voice relate the story of the past, and how she was deceived basely by the man she married while loving another—at least this may be his reward after all these years of action, partly indulged in with the hope of forgetfulness.

And so he goes.

Hildegarde is with her mother, but she already knows the story, so that her presence does not worry him.

There, in the little cabin of the launch Sir Roderic hears all, and when the story has been finished he realizes that she has suffered far worse than himself through the evil machinations of the unscrupulous man whose passion for a girl had led him to deception for which he later on received her deserved scorn.

The reconciliation is complete, for Sir Roderic is not the one to harbor hatred against one long since gone to his account; and he feels very much the same as Jack Gordon when he takes the widow's shapely hand in his, and gravely presses it to his mustached lips.

Sir Roderic is again hopelessly enthralled.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A STOP IN THE CRUISE TO TRIESTE

That night of nights wears on.

Jack will never forget it, since it is marked with a white stone in the history of his fight for a sweetheart.

He sleeps not at all, though coiling up on one of the cushioned seats of the launch for an hour or two when Sir Roderic takes charge of the boat. His mind is filled with a thousand fancies, and again and again does a feeling of deep thankfulness sweep over him at the thought of Hildegarde being there within a few yards of where he sits—*his* Hildegarde, now, not the count's.

They have made the ladies fairly comfortable in the forward part of the cabin, drawing a curtain arranged for that purpose, and the motion of the boat is so easy that there seems no reason why they

should not sleep, after the exciting events so lately encountered.

Hildegarde, in her wedding dress, feels very strange indeed, but all this will be remedied when they reach Trieste, if fortune allows them that privilege.

Taken in all they are a very contented little cruising party, though some anxiety is felt for what the morrow may bring.

Sir Roderic having mastered the secret of the motor insists upon having his share of the fun, and while Chauncey sleeps manipulates matters just as well as the skipper—indeed, there is little to do once the power is turned on and the launch speeding forward.

Antonio and his compatriot curl themselves up forward and sleep. In this balmy clime all they ask is a clear sky for a cover. Their part of the work is done, since the boat has passed beyond the range of territory familiar to them, and everything is now in the hands of the old commander.

Sir Roderic is like a night owl—not once does he close his eyes during the voyage.

A sense of responsibility rests upon him such as he has not known for many a day—a new feeling has come over him since learning that all these years while they were separated by a cruel fate and the

barefaced deceit of another man, his Hildegarde has never ceased to remember him with tender affection. Life takes on a rosy hue the man of adventure has never expected to see again; and many times during the lonely watches of the night he pinches himself as if to make sure he does not dream. When a fellow has gone almost twenty years under the belief that his romance is buried beyond all resurrection, it is hard to realize such a wonderful awakening.

And so the stars troop westward, and the little cedar triumph of Yankee boat-building creeps along toward the region whence will come the dawn.

Many times Sir Roderic stands up and looks ahead and on either side, desirous of finding his bearings, for it is his plan to keep just so far from the land in order to feel his way along; besides, in such a mosquito craft it would hardly be wise to go out any distance, for storms sweep across the Adriatic and Ægean seas at this time of year that have made many a family of Greek and Italian fishermen mourn.

Several times during the night cruise the launch runs aground upon some bar of sand that extends out from a point, but on each occasion, by reversing the small propeller, they have little trouble in getting off, with no damage done—better that, than by keeping

too far out lose their bearings and be lost upon a wide stretch of salty water.

More than once Sir Roderic discovers lights over the starboard quarter and some miles away, though these are soon swallowed up by outlying islands that come between.

Of course he is unable to determine whether these proceed from the hostile steam yacht of Count Rubini or some fishing or trading vessel going from port to port; but it is natural to believe the worst, and that those whom they have reason to fear are hastening to reach a point where they may patrol the coast and overhaul the fugitives.

Once Sir Roderic lights a lantern and shielding the light so that it may not betray their position, he studiously examines a chart which Chauncey has shown him in a locker. This gives him his bearings again.

The dawn is near at hand, and Sir Roderic redoubles his vigilance. Ahead he makes out an island, only a small affair upon which it is hardly probable human beings dwell. This is the last they will meet with—beyond lies an open stretch where the yacht will no doubt be lying in wait for them.

This plan is already arranged.

Shutting off most of the power he runs the launch

gently behind the island, and one of the Italians in the bow drops the anchor over.

Sir Roderic, usually so reckless and daring, has suddenly developed a cautious streak—this unexpected event happening in his career, has brought about a change, and he believes it the part of wisdom to remain in hiding until they can see whether or not the coast is clear.

Jack is at his side the moment the anchor drops, and Chauncey also arouses to see what is in the wind, so that they are able to have a little council of war, at which it is decided that Sir Roderic's plan is a good one.

At any rate they will speedily know the worst, for the night is past, and already in the east the sky shows streaks of the coming gray dawn.

The ladies, bless them, still sleep on, secure in the belief that staunch protectors guard them. It is a good thing to have confidence.

Jack is feeling as fresh as a daisy, in spite of his long vigil, and declares himself ready to accomplish wonderful things in order to bring the ladies safe to Trieste, where they will be secure under the British consul's care.

Hildegarde's mother has revealed that in connection with the wonderful Monks which makes it posi-

tive that however strenuously he may back the irate count up in the endeavor to regain possession of the latter's intended bride, he will never dare to proceed to extreme measures, and pit his strength against that of her Majesty's representatives, for once his identity is known he will be in hot water as the counselor and right-hand man of the Zanzibar rebel Said Khalid.

Sir Roderic drops into the little dinghy which has trailed along after the launch, and paddles to the point of the island for an observation.

He is gone about a quarter of an hour, and when he comes back daylight has swept the last battalions of night far into the west, for a glow in the horizon tells that the smiling face of old Phœbus will soon appear.

Jack, meeting the soldier as he sweeps alongside, endeavors to read the result of his little scout upon his face, but he might as well attempt to find emotion on the stone Sphinx that guards the pyramids, for Sir Roderic is complete master of his feelings.

"Did you see anything of them?" he asks.

"Oh! yes, they're on deck, sure enough," is the quiet response.

"Waiting for us to appear?"

"And not more than a quarter of a mile away from our anchorage."

Jack at this gives a low whistle and looks a shade more anxious, while his eyes involuntarily turn first to the trees that conceal the yacht from their gaze, and then upon the little brass cannon which once served them to such good purpose. At which the soldier smiles with appreciation, for to his warlike nature resistance to the last gasp is the sum total of his creed.

"Yes," he says, quietly, "if it comes to that we will give them a sample of what we gave the Zanzibaris slavers. I reckon an Englishman has as much right to defend himself and what belongs to him, his sweetheart, in Adriatic waters, as well as in those along the African coast. Right or no right, Jack, my boy, we are bound to do it, if it brings on war between Italy and Great Britain."

"Ah!" remarks Gordon, squeezing his hand with a heartiness that proclaims his assent, "we have not exhausted our last resource yet, by a good deal."

As Jack expresses a desire to look upon the enemy's boat, he paddles ashore and makes his way cautiously across the island, taking advantage of rocks and woods.

Meanwhile the ladies having appeared on the scene

the situation is explained to them, so that all may keep from betraying their hiding place, by avoiding any sound above the ordinary.

Breakfast is next in order.

Chauncey is quite proud of his floating home, and its possibilities, and he shows them how to start a fire on the small gasolene range, where a pot of coffee may be boiled in short order.

Sir Roderic and Jack are half starved, having eaten nothing on the preceding night.

Only for the presence of the enemy's sentinel boat so near at hand they might feel quite merry over the meal, it is so much after the picnic style.

Jack reports nothing new when he returns, and one of the Italians is dispatched to keep guard and inform them if the steam yacht pulls up anchor as if to move away.

The discovery is probably only delayed, for it does not seem possible that they can remain there the whole day unnoticed.

Sir Roderic has been shrewd enough to figure on what they may do in case the steam yacht chases them—the water is shoal between the island and the shore, and probably the yacht would have to give up the pursuit as the risk of running aground would be too great.

Then if the enemy endeavored to continue the chase in small boats they could easily outrun those.

It is really a question in his mind as to whether it might be best to remain there and take the chances of discovery, or by making a bold strike for shoal water, catch the enemy unawares, with their anchor down in the mud, and fires low.

When breakfast is over he means to have the opinion of his two comrades upon this very matter, which may seriously affect their whole future.

Chauncey brings forth hosts of good things from nooks where they have been stowed away, and it is plainly evident that they need fear nothing in the shape of starvation, while in his hands.

Chauncey would make a good forager in a military sense, so Sir Roderick declares.

Just as they declare themselves satisfied Antonio is seen waving his arms as he runs down the little beach to the dinghy; and at the same moment Hildegarde utters an exclamation of alarm and points to the northern end of the little island, around which a boat occupied by at least half a dozen men has suddenly shot into full view.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE BATTLE OF THE ADRIATIC

It would be pretty hard to decide which is the more astonished—our little party at sight of the boat, or those who, turning the head of the island to secure a view of the stretch beyond, unexpectedly discover the launch they seek, right under their very noses.

On the whole, as Sir Roderic and his friends have all along been aware of the presence of the steam yacht, those in the boat have the better reason for being amazed.

"To arms! they come! the Turk! the Turk!" exclaims Sir Roderic, with something more than humor in his voice.

Weapons have fortunately been looked after before this time, since the veteran is not the man to let so vital a matter be neglected until the critical moment comes when they are badly needed.

So at his command each of them spring up and seize upon a repeating rifle. With such reliable weapons in hand, it would be strange if they should not feel a confidence in the ultimate result.

"Into the cabin, ladies, and crouch down behind the cushions," is the next order which Sir Roderic gives. They obey.

His manner is of a man having authority, and to obey is quite natural.

To Rinaldo he also sings out, and the latter begins to lift the anchor.

As for Chauncey, he does not need to be told his part in the drama. Already the New York swell is on his knees before the little engine, pumping away with one hand and reaching for a match with the other, determined to get up power in about the shortest space of time on record.

Antonio has entered the dinghy and is on the way from the shore, standing erect and paddling with might and main, for he has seen the preparations that indicate a hasty departure, and would not be abandoned.

All this has occurred in much less time than it takes to tell it—a score of seconds, perhaps half a minute, has elapsed since the boat belonging to the count's yacht first poked her nose around the head

of the island, and this represents the time in which the occupants, too amazed to shout, sit and stare at the object of their search.

Then they recover from their surprise and let out a roar. It is echoed from the opposite quarter, and Sir Roderic, turning his head makes an unpleasant discovery.

The second boat of the yacht has rounded the other end of the small islet, and there are even a greater number of men manning her than occupy the one first discovered.

Plainly, then, they are to be attacked from both quarters at once, and there can be no flight until they have disabled one or both of these boats.

"It is going to be *war!*" says Sir Roderic, grimly, as he passes over to where the little brass cannon has been placed, an action which is witnessed with a foreboding by one among those in the boats; for Colonel Monks has been there before, and can not forget the fearful destruction among the Arab dhows that followed the veteran's former handling of that superb little gun.

The boats no longer rest supinely upon the blue water, but are in motion. Those in command seem to grasp the situation fairly well. Instead of advancing directly upon the launch, they make a

little detour. This is done with the evident intention of cutting her off should she begin to move through the water.

Jack has laid down his gun and seized upon a setting pole with which he immediately begins to push the boat around, in order that her head may be away from the island, as it happens she lies that way, so that as soon as Chauncey is ready to start, they will be able to move straight ahead.

In an emergency such as this it is really surprising how much several level headed fellows can accomplish when each of them starts in to do a certain thing.

Antonio has reached the launch and tumbles aboard, fastening the painter with trembling hands, for Antonio is no warrior, and hardly likes the looks of things.

The shock can not long be delayed.

Rinaldo has succeeded in recovering the anchor, and at Sir Roderic's order stands by to assist him with the little gun.

The son of Italy has a flashing glow in his black eyes, and his nostrils quiver with anticipation of the battle—Sir Roderic, looking at his eager expression, can not but feel a deep admiration for his courageous qualities, nor does he longer doubt the

story Rinaldo told about his father having been at the right hand of the illustrious Garibaldi in that Italian patriot's struggle for liberty.

By this time the two attacking boats appear to have reached the points that will afford them the anticipated advantage. They no longer advance toward each other, but at a signal from the count, who is in command, turn and head in the direction of the launch.

It is a critical moment.

"All ready!" sings out Sir Roderic, and from both Jack and Chauncey comes an affirmative "Ay, ay, sir."

Something is about to happen, that is positive, and whatever it may be, the Italian sailormen will hardly appreciate it.

Still, they may learn a little wisdom, and show less enthusiasm the next time they find themselves pitted against Anglo-Saxon blood—at least, those who await their coming with such grim determination intend that it shall be so if they can arrange it.

Under the impetus of numerous oars, handled in pretty fair man-o'-war style, the two hostile boats come darting forward. They churn up the water a little more than is absolutely necessary, the

cool veteran thinks, but on the whole he rather admires their style.

Presently he believes they have come about far enough, and makes ready to call a halt.

Standing there, clearly outlined, he raises one hand warningly.

"Stop where you are!"

The shout rolls over the water in the direction of the boats—it must undoubtedly reach every ear, and while some among the Dago sailormen may not understand the words, there is not a man who fails to comprehend the import of the cry.

Do they cease rowing? On the contrary, they appear to bend their backs with more vim than before—bravo! the spirit of the fire-eater Garibaldi yet lives in many of his valorous countrymen, and it really makes Sir Roderic sick at heart to think he is compelled by necessity to shoot down those with whom his country has been on the warmest terms from time immemorial. And yet, there is no escape—were they Britons, and bent upon such a desperate mission, he would do the same thing.

Seeing that they have no intention of pulling up, he gives one more trial—if they fail to take advantage of that their blood must rest upon their own heads.

"You are rushing to death, I tell you, count. In God's name, stop where you are or we shall fire. We have no other resource," is what he says, clearly but firmly.

No one answers in words.

He hears the count exclaim in Italian the word "Forward."

He sees him rise in the stern sheets of his boat and hold out his arm as though pointing toward the launch.

Something glitters in the sunlight—it is the gleam of polished steel.

"Look out!" cries Jack.

There is a puff of smoke and a report.

Simultaneously with the appearance of the smoke Sir Roderic hears a peculiar zip-zip sound very close to his ear, by which he is made aware of the fact that he has been the target at which the count fired.

It was not such a poor shot.

At least it serves to open the ball, and thrusts the blame upon the enemy.

Jack and Chauncey will stand it no longer. They have been aroused to the fever pitch.

New recruits never can stand steady under fire

where veterans do not flinch, and are always the first to return the "pyrotechnics."

So Chauncey opens.

He would not do to serve under the man at Bunker Hill, old Putnam, who ordered his boys not to fire a shot until they could see the whites of the enemies' eyes.

True, his bullet does no damage and goes skipping and ricochetting over the little wavelets beyond, but it must have sung a note of warning in passing over the heads of those in the boat.

Chauncey will do better next time.

Given a magazine rifle of rare shooting qualities, holding fifteen cartridges, together with a boat full of men drawing closer with each sweep of the oars, and it must be a wretched piece of anatomy that is unable to plant a few bullets where they will do the most good.

So Greene begins to work the mechanism of his rifle with a rare pertinacity that promises to keep the occupants of one boat busy dodging bullets—indeed, so thickly do the merciless little leaden monsters fly around them that after two men have received wounds more or less serious, the remainder begin to be demoralized, and through bad manage-

ment the boat swings around broadside to the launch.

This is a serious move.

At least it equalizes matters, since every tub must now stand on its own bottom, and take the chances of the flying shots.

As yet Gordon has not fired.

He reserves himself until such time as the little swell may have exhausted his magazine, when, should there be any of the enemy left, it may be his bounden duty to finish them.

As the boat turns broadside, however, a most brilliant thought flashes into his head.

He sees a chance to cool off the ardor of the attacking force, or rather one portion of it in capital style.

Instantly his gun is leveled, not at the alarmed inmates of the boat, already thrown into confusion by the steady rattle of Chauncey's piece, but covering the extreme bow.

Jack has seen that the boat is a frail structure, possibly made of cedar, and knowing the amazing trajecting power of the leaden messengers fired from such a gun, he conceives the idea of smashing a thirty-eight calibre slug through the bow just at the water line.

Thus he too opens and rattles a few shots off in

alternate time with Greene, while the heavy boom of the little cannon adds its deep bass to the chorus.

Really, war has broken out upon the lovely Adriatic!

CHAPTER XXXIX

SIR RODERIC'S LAST SHOT

The water battle is not altogether one sided, although Sir Roderic and his companions seem to have things pretty much their own way.

Count Rubini has his fighting blood aroused, and while his first shot was not much of a success beyond calling out an answering fire from the enemy, he continues to send the contents of his revolver in the direction of the launch.

Perhaps he fires pretty much at random, but bullets sent that way sometimes find a billet, and do fully as much damage as others dispatched by the most expert marksman.

Chauncey, stooping down at his engine, is fairly protected by the bulwarks.

He pays strict attention to business, and while the others engage the foe, the skipper grapples with the

They resort to nature's first law—that of self-preservation, and a great splashing ensues while they chase each other in the endeavor to land first.

Meanwhile, what of Sir Roderic and the second boat from the steam yacht?

We already know the soldier found a chance to discharge the brass gun, but with what success remains to be seen.

The launch does not present the firmest foundation possible from which to fire, since the action of Jack in turning the boat with the setting pole has caused the light craft to wobble as though in the wash of a heavy sea. Nevertheless, Sir Roderic, having given his whole attention to the task, grapples with the difficulties in the way and, in his usual determined manner, overcomes them.

Thus he seizes upon the little brass gun, and jerks it around without ceremony, watching his chance to do good work when he pulls the cord, keeping one eye on the advancing boat meanwhile.

Around his head the loving messengers which Rubini sends fast upon each other's heels, sing like mad hornets, but Sir Roderic minds them not.

Even when a sudden, hot sensation in his arm tells him that one of the missiles has cut a neat little gash in his flesh, he does not flinch—wounds are an

old story with this man of war, so that he simply recognizes the coming of an acquaintance he has met on many a battle field.

And when the hoarse bark of that yacht cannon is heard, it is accompanied by a ripping and rending of delicate planks—such a confusion of splintered stem and thwarts, lap streaks and keel, and everything possible going to make up a modern rowing craft has never before been scattered upon Adriatic waters.

That shot sometimes causes Sir Roderic to shake his head and marvel to this day, and he vows it was the luckiest he ever knew. It is as if the key to the whole construction of the boat might be in the stem, and that his projectile, in striking this, has scattered the fabric broadcast—indeed, to judge from the wreck, there are hardly two pieces of the once beautiful boat remaining in conjunction, such has been the shattering force of the impact.

And the crew—well, they certainly give evidence of being the worst demoralized set the soldier of fortune ever saw. Some have been thrown into the air by the force of the concussion, to drop into the water with a great splash immediately after their more fortunate companions.

The metamorphosis is something dreadful, and one might with reason rub his eyes and wonder whether it is not all a phantasmagoric dream.

Five seconds ago there rested upon the water a boat shaped by expert hands—a boat that marked the triumph of the builder's art, and filled with some seven or eight men who wielded the oars with a muscular force that made it dance over the little wavelets like "a thing of beauty and a joy forever."

Then came that crash.

Alas! as the white smoke drifts to leeward on the gentle breeze there may be seen some debris scattered upon the water, the wretched remains of a once proud craft, and among the splintered wreckage men are splashing to recover an upright position.

Monks leads in the race for the shore—Monks who has had about all he cares for in this matter, and is ready to throw up his hand.

Apparently no one has been killed by the disaster, which seems almost miraculous; but a couple of poor devils flounder around in the water as though badly hurt.

"Help your wounded, you rascals!" roars the old soldier, with indignation, but not a fellow turns—it seems to be "each man for himself, and the devil

take the hindmost," so the two stricken ducks are compelled to splash their way ashore unassisted.

The launch is in motion—Chauncey has turned on the power, and so far as these assailants are concerned they are in a position to shake them off.

There remains but one other source of danger for them.

The steam yacht!

As the launch opens the end of the island her little crew discover the count's boat bearing directly down upon them.

Evidently they have kept up a full head of steam all the while, and at the first shot, probably guessing the truth, have slipped their anchor, and started for the scene of hostilities.

Here is a new source of impending peril.

Sir Roderic has slammed another cartridge into his little brass beauty, and realizing that the chase is to be a stern one, he again starts to carry the cannon from its position in the bow to the little deck beyond the engine, in which action Jack materially assists.

As for Chauncey, he has opened wide every valve, and the launch is doing her prettiest.

In spite of all, the engines of the yacht are in-

tended to shove her graceful hull through the water at more than twice the speed of the smaller boat, and her gain is so rapid that she seems to be overhauling the launch, as Chauncey expresses it "hawnd over fist, by Jove!"

CHAPTER XL

CUTTING THE LION'S CLAWS

As the trim yacht comes along in their wake, Sir Roderic takes a sweeping survey of the situation.

They can not expect to reach shallow water under ten minutes, and ere that time has elapsed the yacht will have cut them down.

Plainly, it begins to look as though heroic measures will again have to be resorted to, and Sir Roderic has his doubts as to the ability of the little gun to make an impression on the iron hull of the steam yacht.

It makes considerable difference whether the target chances to be the wooden sides of wretched Arab slave dhows, delicate cedar planking such as constituted the two row boats so recently smashed, or the plated bow of a modern steam yacht.

Therefore, Sir Roderic imagines the game may

degenerate into one of hide and seek, of dodging hither and thither, at which play, the smaller boat will have an advantage, being able to turn in a shorter circuit.

Perhaps, by twisting and squirming, they may lead the yacht into shoal water and leave her stranded in the mud, while they speed away for the Austrian city—"that were a consummation devoutly to be wished."

Meanwhile, on comes the pursuing craft, covering ten yards to their five, and the outlook is serious indeed.

Jack stands upon the side, holding on to the cabin. The ladies, bless them, have maintained a silence that does them credit during all this excitement. He is contemplating what can be done should the yacht succeed in overtaking and running them down. Much depends on the ability of the one who grasps the wheel. Antonio is at that post now, but Antonio can hardly be depended on to accomplish a successful result; so Jack hustles over to that quarter himself.

The yacht is only a few cables' length behind, and swiftly diminishing their lead. In another minute the critical time will have arrived when the

success or failure of his maneuver must decide their fate. Half of that time has elapsed, and Jack's hands grip the little wheel, ready to whirl it around and start upon a circle, when the eccentric evolutions may begin.

He does not make the move. Even as he sets his teeth hard together and decides that it might be foolish to longer delay, he hears the cheery voice of the veteran booming over the wave.

"Look! they are losing their headway—we hold our own—their hearts have failed them, perhaps—no, no, something has happened on board the yacht—she drifts, helpless, as if her machinery had broken down."

Then Jack and Sir Roderic look at one another and in a low voice the former utters a name, at which the veteran smiles and nods. That name is Shandy O'Moore.

The Irishman has kept his pledge.

Months afterwards Jack accidentally runs across the friendly Celt, of course out of funds as usual, and stranded in a strange capital; and he makes him the happiest man on earth for that day.

They have now nothing to fear, for with the yacht's machinery out of order, her boats destroyed,

and the main portion of her crew stranded on the little islet, our friends can reach Trieste in safety.

Thus they glide along over a summer sea, with happy hearts on board. Antonio and his compatriot are filled with delight over the outcome of the adventure, and pass away the hours with song; while in the cabin the others exchange confidences.

Sir Roderic has experienced the extreme felicity of having the widow bandage his arm, and admires the nerve she shows.

"It was all a terrible mistake," he says, aside; "you were always intended for a soldier's wife. Well, better late than never, and we'll endeavor to be so happy that the past will all be forgotten."

From which it can readily be seen that a distinct understanding has been reached between these two who loved each other in the long ago, and were so cruelly separated.

Sir Roderic has intended making his way to Cuba and offering his sword to the brave Gomez, in the cause of liberty; but all this is changed now, and the active scenes of his life are in the past—he has left the tempestuous ocean and reached a peaceful harbor where storms may not enter the harbor of connubial felicity.

As they lunch he falls into a reminiscent mood, possibly on account of their recent adventure, and entertains the others with vivid descriptions of sights that fell under his own personal observation during the rebellion in Chili in which he had a part, the bombardment of Rio Janiero which he witnessed from an English vessel, and the previous British shelling of Alexandria.

These descriptions lose none of their interest because true, nor does Sir Roderic ever boast of his own personal achievements in the engagements; but those who know his valor can readily understand that where the fighting was thickest there the soldier of fortune might always have been found, for the crash of battle was to him an appeal to the arbitrament of arms quite irresistible—an alluring sound that stirred his very soul.

No sign of pursuit is discovered, and they make merry over the disaster that has overwhelmed their enemies, especially since fortune has been so kind to them that the victory has been almost a bloodless one.

The little launch proves staunch and true, and in due time they reach Trieste, having made one landing while en route, to cook a meal and stretch their limbs.

In the Austrian city they find a chance to go to an hotel, though their stay is limited, as a steamer starts for London in the morning, on which they expect to sail.

Chauncey leaves his launch in safe hands, intending to return and spend some time cruising along the shores of the beautiful Grecian islands.

He accompanies them to London, because he has made a vow to see the last of bachelor Jack, for whom he has conceived the warmest affection possible between men; and besides he has a notion that Jack's Hildegarde will make the loveliest bride of the season.

When the good ship has entered the haven after a tempestuous voyage, the anxiety and strain concerning her safety are removed, and there comes a calm content.

So, after a little ceremony, one day, when Hildegarde becomes Mrs. Jack Gordon, and her mother rewards the faithful affection of Sir Roderic Cavendish, our characters having left the enchanted realm of romantic adventure and settled down to the prosaic, contented state of connubial blessedness, evidently the time has arrived to bid them *bon voyage* upon the sea of life, and let the curtain fall; for with such sturdy protectors ever at their

side the ladies need never again fear evil at the hands of that wizard hypnotist, Colonel Monks, who doubtless plies his nefarious trade in other portions of the globe, under the belief that the world owes him a living.

THE END.